



Start with the child

Report of the CLIP Working Group on library provision
for children and young people

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Chartered Institute of
Library and Information
Professionals

Above all we need to start young, so that a positive view of books, reading and libraries is embedded from the earliest stages of development and children are not excluded from the opportunities, excitement and sheer joy which libraries can bring into their lives.

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Preface – Minister of State for the Arts

I welcome the findings of this report, which is the outcome of a working group, convened by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), to look at an issue which I consider hugely important: the future of library services for young people.

The starting point for the work of this group was research, specially commissioned by Re:source (the Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries), which provided a fundamental assessment of the needs and aspirations of children and young people in the UK today.

The report recognises the contribution libraries can make in delivering government policies - on lifelong learning and combating social exclusion - and improving the quality of life of children and young people in the UK. It provides a strongly integrated vision of how library services to young people should work – linking in with education, social services and all the agencies that impact on the child's quality of life. And it paints a very clear picture of the needs and influences on young people, which must be understood if we are to deliver services that are relevant and which they will enjoy.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport is committed to developing opportunities for children and young people. Many public libraries are doing much good work already. Libraries encourage the pleasure of reading at an early age, which intuitively we all know must be important to children's future development and which research has proved. They provide valuable support for older children and young people at school. This report highlights some of the excellent schemes run by many library authorities, such as the successful Bookstart programme for babies, annual Summer Reading Challenge and Study Support/Homework clubs. It points to the many successful partnerships between libraries and others such as the close link with Sure Start programmes for children under four and their families.

Society today is changing rapidly. Children and young people need to be equipped with the right skills to take up the opportunities, which are open to them and to deal with the challenges they face. This Government believes in the need to create a 'learning society' in which everyone routinely expects to learn and upgrade skills throughout their life. By making sure that our children and young people have good literacy skills, we are providing them with the foundations for future learning, enabling them to develop their own talents to lead fulfilling lives.

The role of libraries in supporting learning is obvious. But libraries are also about helping young people to discover the sheer pleasure of reading, stimulating the imagination, supporting creativity and fuelling the drive to find out more. The importance of this cannot be underestimated. That is why it is vital that we constantly work to develop and refine the services, which are on offer to young people in all our public libraries. This report is part of that process.

Tessa Blackstone

Foreword

Over the years, on my travels as Chief Education Officer for Birmingham, I have always carried a box of books from the Schools Library Service in the boot of my car. Who knows when I might feel the need to sit down and read a story to an assembly, a class or an individual child? The magic of books and reading has always played an important part in my view of children's learning and I believe that libraries have a very special role to play in offering children the opportunity to read voraciously, allowing them to roam outside the boundaries of their own experience.

Children are in school for a mere 15% of their waking lives. Schools can only satisfy a small part of a child's learning appetite. The community curriculum is where real lifelong learning takes place and children need access to the role models, mentors and the wealth of inspiration which lies around them. Their school library or local public library is where they can find a treasure trove of print and electronic resources, the skills of supportive and enthusiastic mediators and innovative projects to challenge and motivate them. Whether it is during the early years, with Bookstart and mother and toddler activities, through study support in school and public libraries or advice and materials for teachers via the Schools Library Service, or even during the school holidays with the Summer Reading Challenge, libraries are helping children to achieve their potential.

My vision of learning for children and young people in the future, has the library, in all its forms, at its heart. We owe it to them to take note of the recommendations in this report, work together across professional boundaries and ensure that library services to children and young people continue to develop and thrive.

Professor Tim Brighouse

Introduction

Why I read

I read because one life isn't enough and in the pages of a book, I can be anybody.

I read because the words that build the story become mine, to build my life.

I read, not for happy endings, but for new beginnings; I'm just beginning myself and I wouldn't mind a map.

Richard Peck

Reading is a hugely important part of children's and young people's development. Books inspire their imagination, help them to grow emotionally, and develop their understanding of the world and their place in the local and global community, past and present.

Libraries are a hugely important part of children's and young people's lives because they bring books and children together; they provide reading opportunities free of charge, and so they encourage experimentation and learning. They represent a non-judgmental place for children to feel safe and empowered to make their own choices. The library ethos emphasises individual rights, voluntary involvement and exposure to minority interests and challenging ideas, through print based or other media.

Reading and libraries are therefore crucial to achieving our national ambitions for community cohesion, tolerance, social inclusion, lifelong learning, active citizenship, creativity and healthy and happy lives for our children.

Developing responsive and high quality library services to children and young people has long been a priority at a national and local level, but periodically the time comes for that ambition to be redefined, in the light of change, and for our performance to be reassessed in relation to the current needs of children and young people. Now is just such a moment.

A vision of the kind of library service which must be developed if children and young people are to retain a positive and loyal relationship with their libraries, has emerged during the writing of the report which follows. The background and terms of reference are contained in the appendices, together with a list of members of the Working Group which shaped it and the four people delegated to write the report itself. Thanks are due to them for their efforts to reflect the outcomes of a huge amount of research and many case studies, as well as the ambitions of the Working Party. There are obviously too many examples of good practice and imaginative innovation going on across the UK to include even a small percentage of them.

However, this in no way reflects on those services which have not been mentioned, rather more on the impossibility of the task. The grateful thanks of the writing group and the Working Group go to those library staff who are constantly breaking down barriers and extending the boundaries of their work, the better to satisfy the needs of children and young people.

Vivien Griffiths

Liz Dubber

Jonathan Douglas

Linda Saunders

Margaret Snook

On behalf of the Working Group

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I. BACKGROUND

Start with the Child has the following Terms of Reference:

- To examine the changing library needs of children and young people
- To examine the extent to which they are being met by existing library services for children and young people, provided through the public library service, school and further education libraries and school library services
- To review the relationship between libraries, reading, literacy and learning revealed in recent research and development work and assess its impact and effectiveness on library services
- To recommend improvements and how to bring them about, in library services for children and young people

The overriding commitment of the Working Group and the authors of the report was to focus always on the needs of children and young people, in considering the future of services and to base their conclusions on the evidence of research, rather than rhetoric.

2. THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- 2.1 A great deal of the evidence used comes from a major research project entitled *Start with the Child*, commissioned by Resource to support this report. Alongside other pieces of research, it showed that although the development needs of children themselves have not changed, the context in which children grow and learn is radically different in the 21st Century.

Influences such as changes in family structures, our diverse and rapidly changing society, technological advances, the information society and the pressures of a popular youth culture which begins with children as young as seven and relates closely to our consumerist society, all affect the needs of children and young people today.

- 2.2 The research revealed:

- A tendency to become increasingly consumerist and materialistic at a younger age
- Conflicting pressures from alternative leisure and lifestyle pursuits, consumerism, marketing, educational aspirations, job opportunities, career choices and relationships amongst the older age group
- Poor literacy and numeracy reflected in higher levels of unemployment, later in life
- A desire to be listened to and offered the chance to contribute ideas and effort and to exercise a degree of power over their environment
- A need to be treated as individuals although they often present themselves to others as groups
- A desire for space which belongs to them for themselves and their friends
- A need to develop information literacy to deal with the increasing range and quality of information, in order to make choices
- A desire to exploit new media, as they see information technology as a natural learning environment and computer ownership is high, but not by any means universal
- A preference for TV and video, but a positive attitude towards reading

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- A need to have access to a wide range of appropriate books, to be read to, to be given help and guidance in choosing books, opportunities to talk to peers about reading experiences and the support of an interested adult and reading role models

2.3 A successful library service for children and young people therefore needs to encompass the following:

Appropriate environments and services:

- safe and welcoming environments with spaces which support diverse activities and provide a haven for users of different ages
- technology to support and develop reading and access to information
- impressive and interactive displays, activities and exhibitions
- libraries that are more like shops, where they want to visit, and 'hang out'
- a welcome when in groups, and to be treated with respect as individuals

Services that are relevant and responsive

- libraries that are open when they need them and can access them (evenings, weekends), opportunities to take responsibility, and exercise freedom of choice
- recognition of their pop culture and materials which are relevant to their interests and self image
- recognition of their varied learning needs and materials, services and space to meet these needs
- opportunities to participate and be involved in the planning and delivery of services, to provide feedback and have their ideas listened to and acted upon

Appropriate help for children and young people and for those who support them

- staff who have the time and skills to assist and support them in making best use of the service
- staff who are interested in their literature and reading, and can share ideas and encourage them to read new things and in new ways
- support for parents and carers in helping their children
- recognition that every individual is unique, with a unique combination of needs.
- resources targeted to meet particular needs, and changes in the nature of main stream services where necessary to foster and achieve inclusiveness.

Support from the community at large to use and benefit from services

- services that are marketed to them and their parents
- work outside the library to promote the benefits of library use with a range of partners, especially in order to reach hard-to-reach groups and individuals
- a holistic 'joined up' approach by services, to meet their needs as individuals
- partnerships with schools, libraries, pre-school settings and bookshops to promote book ownership and use

3. LIBRARIES, READING, LITERACY AND LEARNING

- 3.1 Libraries have a unique role in supporting children's learning, via public libraries, school libraries and schools library services.
- 3.2 The Bookstart scheme has had a proven effect on parental attitudes and in improving the achievement of very young children in relation to early literacy. It works best in library services which have built on the initiative, developing other services for young children to encourage parents to use the library. The links between Bookstart and Sure Start schemes have proved valuable and have led to best practice in partnership working.
- 3.3 Excellent innovative projects for the development of information literacy through libraries have been developed and the People's Network funding for the training of teachers and librarians has been valuable in developing ICT skills, but additional research is needed to aid understanding of information skills and how the library and teaching professions can support each other. It is particularly crucial that information literacy skills are developed across all library sectors (early years, public libraries, schools and FE and HE libraries) and across the curriculum in a cohesive way.
- 3.4 Support to parents and carers, as their child's first teacher, is shown to be critical by all the research. Libraries have the potential to deliver a great deal, they are active in family literacy projects, accessible and open to all. However, the National Strategy for Improving Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills does not mention libraries and parents themselves do not always see the possibilities offered by libraries. Better marketing of library services to parents and better advocacy to policy makers is required.
- 3.5 Libraries support both formal and informal learning experiences very effectively. They can foster enjoyment, broadening and supporting the formal curriculum. However, some government initiatives seem to have placed barriers in the way of that role. The Literacy Hour may inadvertently have reduced the number of visits by schools to libraries but the later stages of the National Literacy Strategy show a better understanding of the potential of school and public libraries.
- 3.6 Libraries have responded to the competition for children's time and attention by entering into imaginative and ground-breaking reader development activity. The National Year of Reading demonstrated what libraries can achieve, with a small amount of funding. They responded to the challenge with many innovative projects, targeted at very specific needs, often in partnership with other organisations. The creation of The Reading Agency will support a range of projects, which will build on previous successes such as the Summer Reading Challenge, where children are encouraged to sustain their reading throughout the school holidays and where a high quality product shared nationally has proved that children will respond to excellence in marketing and materials. A partnership project called Their Reading Futures will, in the future, provide training, advocacy and awareness raising for library staff to focus on developing young readers as the focus of their services.
- 3.7 Study Support, both in schools and libraries, has succeeded in improving attitudes of children and young people to learning and has been particularly helpful to socially excluded young people. Financing of study support in libraries is patchy and the

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nature of New Opportunities Fund Out of Hours Learning funding has led to the notion that schools and libraries are in competition. This is unhelpful, especially as there are clearly some children who are not comfortable in the school environment. In the library, they have not just a different setting for learning, but new interpersonal dynamics with the staff too.

- 3.8 Fair Funding has caused problems for some schools library services and has led to a reduction in children served by schools library services in England and Wales. There is no uniform experience, they have adapted to survive and no two services provide the same basket of services. Admirable though this responsiveness is, it causes problems in advocating for the importance of a schools library service where there is no one clear model.
- 3.9 The Further Education sector has not received the high profile and levels of sustained funding dedicated to schools. It has also been through massive change. As a result, FE libraries have found it difficult to respond to needs and, especially, the growing presence of the 14-16 year age group in colleges. There is an urgent need for research, guidance and training for librarians in the FE sector and for cross-sectoral working, which could valuably involve Learning and Skills Councils and Connexions services.
- 3.10 Research shows that the relationship between school librarians and teachers has a significant impact on the quality of learning in schools. Better integration, mutual understanding and respect need to be developed. The same is doubtless true for the wider relationship between LEA staff and public library staff.
- 3.11 All the research outlined in this chapter provides evidence of an exciting and unique role which is emerging for libraries in underpinning lifelong learning. However, the evidence also suggests that this role is not sufficiently valued by policy makers and strategists. It is both wasteful and counter-productive for any government initiative which supports lifelong learning to ignore the potential contribution of libraries, particularly where children and young people are concerned. All the evidence demonstrates that they have a crucial role to play.

4. MEETING CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS

Data Collection

- 4.1 There is now a considerable amount of information available about the ways in which libraries touch children's lives, but much of it is not easily available or shared widely.
- 4.2 Equally, it is not enough to collect the data, it needs to be used to evaluate success and to learn what works. Annual Library Plans, Best Value Reviews, Ofsted reports, are all vehicles for making a qualitative assessment of a service, but they do not focus on specifics.

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Appropriate Environments and Services

- 4.3 There is often a reasonable amount of space in the library for young children, but many libraries only provide a limited amount of study space and little or no casual seating, despite the repeated evidence that young people want a space of their own.
- 4.4 Some authorities have taken steps to involve young people in designing their environment, but examples like this are still the exception, rather than the rule.
- 4.5 The tensions between different users and their needs can affect the atmosphere of the library and both parents and children can feel under pressure.
- 4.6 For children and young people, technology is an essential and fundamental part of their lives. There is a huge potential to reach out to children, wherever they are, but to do so requires an investment of staff time and skills and a willingness to share both the results and the work between library authorities.
- 4.7 Displays and exhibitions can be powerful tools for attracting new members to the library and are widely used. However, not every library has the space, staff confidence or expertise to do this effectively. National activities, like the Summer Reading Challenge, have produced high quality materials which can be used effectively.
- 4.8 85% of library authorities take part in the annual national reading challenge which includes about 4,000 libraries and 500,000 4-11 year olds, attracting 20,000 new members. 8 out of 10 children who participated, consider themselves better readers as a result.

Services which are Relevant and Responsive

- 4.9 One of the most fundamental requirements is for libraries to be open when children and young people need them and can access them. At the moment, many school and public libraries struggle to do this.
- 4.10 Book buying procedures and other internal systems can make it difficult to acquire materials sufficiently quickly for the books to be available promptly. In a more demanding culture, where children and young people expect to have a say, this is a challenge to libraries for the future.
- 4.11 One of the unique aspects of library use is the freedom of choice it offers. Children and young people can experiment with their reading, because it costs nothing. Libraries use displays, booklists and reading groups to help them discuss their reading choices and enjoy recommendations from their peers.
- 4.12 Children and young people want to use libraries to support their learning needs. A number of libraries have responded by providing specific staffing for study support, but it has tended to be in urban areas. Transport difficulties, smaller numbers and less external funding has made this difficult to provide in rural areas. Most of this provision has been supported by external funding which provides only a short term solution. In the longer term, ways of mainstreaming these valuable services must be found if they are to continue.

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- 4.13 The LISU survey for 2000/01 showed that 28% of responding authorities had surveyed their children and young people. Surveys give a snapshot of satisfaction. Some services seek feedback to gain a deeper understanding of their views.

Appropriate Help for Children and Young People and for those Who Support Them

- 4.14 The role of front line staff is vital. Their response makes a real difference to library use. Time, skills and resources affect the confidence with which staff respond. The importance of customer care and staff training has also been recognised. However, children and young people have specific needs and the way in which staff are trained to respond will depend on the priority given to work with children locally.
- 4.15 Surveys by CILIP and LISU indicate a steady rise in full-time chartered school librarian posts. It is essential that the skills needs of these people are addressed, if they are to fulfil their potential in supporting learning and teaching.
- 4.16 Achieving socially inclusive services is a challenge for traditional library services and requires changes in the nature of provision and re-targeting of resources. At the most fundamental level, this requires authorities to look again at their charging and joining procedures, as for many excluded groups, perceptions about them present an insuperable barrier.
- 4.17 Library authorities should ensure that they use the evaluation and reporting process of projects to disseminate the value of the work. The experience of Bookstart has shown that where a scheme is evaluated and reported widely, the commitment from partners and stakeholders will follow.
- 4.18 The fact that so much activity is based on project funding creates problems in integrating and sustaining the benefits within mainstream services. Projects can operate outside the mainstream, getting round barriers to use by ignoring them, rather than challenging and changing the mainstream service.

Support from the Community at large to use and benefit from Services

- 4.19 Partnerships, when they are strong and long lasting can have benefits that extend beyond short-term initiatives. A number of authorities have found their Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership keen to find ways of supporting Bookstart when local funding was needed.
- 4.20 As schools are increasingly seen within the context of the wider education community, in order to deliver the new 14-19 learning agenda, the need for the school library to be at the hub of a network of learning partnerships is more important than ever before. The school librarian now needs to be forging partnerships with learning and teaching programmes outside the school and working collaboratively with learning resource managers in FE and HE, as well as other sectors.

- 4.21 There are examples of good practice where libraries respond to children's and young people's needs in innovative ways, but this is patchy across the country, across age groups and even within authorities. It is clear that where a child lives affects the style of the library service they have access to. If services nationally are to meet young people's needs and expectations effectively, then it is essential that library services work towards a common quality framework so that the quality of experience is consistently high.

5. MEETING THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE FUTURE

The Changing Context

- 5.1 All the indications are that the world will continue to become a more complex place. Patterns of family life, cultural contexts and technological advances will all have an impact on children and young people.
- 5.2 They will be subject to pressures as a result and their expectations will continue to rise in response to our consumer society, despite the fact that poor literacy and numeracy skills give rise to concern about future employability for many young people.
- 5.3 Children and young people will expect to be able to exercise a choice and influence and will continue to wish to be viewed as individuals, despite their adherence to group behaviour.
- 5.4 Technology will be an issue for some children as long as inequality of access to skills and equipment continues, but increasingly it will be a perfectly natural part of their environment. For many children, the increasing range of leisure activities and opportunities will offer competition to books and reading.

Literacy and Learning

- 5.5 The potential for libraries to make a major contribution to learning has not been sufficiently recognised.
- 5.6 The importance of the early years is proven, therefore it is vital that the further development of schemes such as Bookstart and related strategies must be a priority in planning the future.
- 5.7 The apparent lack of awareness amongst the parents and carers who most need library services indicates an urgent need for greater and more professional marketing of services.
- 5.8 Complexity of procedures and the potential cost of fines or payment for damage to books have been proved to be a barrier to library use for many parents.

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- 5.9 The drive to raise standards through the National Curriculum may have unwittingly led to a reduction in the potential for library involvement in the wider field of reading for pleasure, although there are signs that the importance of motivating children beyond the confines of the curriculum is now being recognised.
- 5.10 Using study support as an example, where funding regimes such as NOF have tended to encourage competition between providers, it is crucial in future to focus on the best outcomes for children.
- 5.11 The lessons which could be learned cross-sectorally between schools, Further and Higher Education, in relation to information literacy, should be given a higher profile. The working groups set up as a result of Empowering the Learning Community should progress their work more rapidly.

Appropriate Environments and Services

- 5.12 There is still a need to provide an attractive, welcoming environment in the library for children and young people. Staff attitudes are an important part of the environment and appropriate recruitment and training practices should be put in place.
- 5.13 Children and young people should be involved in designing, stocking and marketing their libraries.
- 5.14 Activities, displays and exhibitions must be undertaken in a professional way, using high quality marketing and promotional materials. It is also important for library staff to take up the challenge of outreach and partnership work outside the library building.
- 5.15 How library services creatively, develop their technology based services in the future, will be an important benchmark of progress. Easy access is the baseline, with creative projects to support reader development, information literacy and study support.

Services which are Relevant and Responsive

- 5.16 Accessible locations and opening hours, which give priority to evening and weekend opening are important. Access to virtual library services must also be a priority for the future to overcome other barriers to use.
- 5.17 Librarians, publishers and booksellers must continue to work together to ensure that youth culture can influence stock, services and activities.

Appropriate Help for Children and Young People and for those who Support Them

- 5.18 The loss of specialist staff is cause for concern, as they have the expertise and knowledge to make the necessary interventions with children and young people and it is a loss which library services can ill afford. Project based staff, who may not be librarians, must be supported with training and networking opportunities and the learning outcomes of their activities must be disseminated.
- 5.19 The National Year of Reading proved that library staff are both inspirational and energetic in supporting children, their parents and carers. Fruitful partnerships were formed in non-traditional locations. Increasingly, this kind of targeted provision must be developed.

Support from the Community at large to use and benefit from Services

- 5.20 Locating the barriers to take up of services and seeking out the partner, with whom the library service can work to find the solution, is the key to success.
- 5.21 Anecdotal evidence suggests that projects make maximum impact when they have library involvement.

Conclusions

- 5.22 Short term, time limited funding has allowed library staff to develop an impressive range of innovative projects, but this has led to a variety of problems, including
- Variation in practice across the country, which may also lead to a variation in the quality of the core service
 - Difficulty in assessing value and impact, because of inadequate evaluation
 - Long term sustainability and an inability to embed the lessons in mainstream services
 - Loss of skills when project workers leave the service
 - Difficulties in learning and sharing outcomes both locally and nationally. This is particularly significant for services in rural communities, which do not have access to the range of external funding opportunities which are available to address urban deprivation. Therefore the opportunity to share in the learning which emerges from projects across the country is extremely important.
 - Loss of advocacy opportunities

A reduction in research projects specifically aimed at disseminating learning from good practice has compounded the issues.

- 5.23 Libraries must develop modern services which reflect and support children's view of culture, recreation and information, if they are to be successful in meeting their needs.
- 5.24 These aims cannot be achieved by libraries working alone. Government has a responsibility to provide more investment in buildings, opening hours, technology and staffing. Schools and educationalists have a responsibility to encourage library use. Publishers need to respond to children's tastes and reading needs. Investment is

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needed in development to trial and evaluate new services, and in particular to meet the needs of children from minority groups and those with special needs. Local authorities should be investing in their library services to provide the best possible support to young people locally. Library services should be doing everything possible to ensure that all staff are confident and competent in supporting children and young people, and local library service managers should be working closely with other services to provide the best possible support to every individual child.

5.25 Above all, we need to start young, through creative partnerships like Bookstart, so that a positive view of books, reading and libraries is embedded from the earliest stages of development and children do not exclude themselves from the opportunities and excitement that libraries can bring into their lives.

Recommendations

Start with the Child aims to develop a vision for the future of library services to children and young people at a local, regional and national level, to make recommendations to achieve the vision, bring about improvements in library services and meet their changing needs.

The recommendations which follow are aimed at a variety of target audiences, including national and local policy makers, regional and sub-regional agencies, professional bodies, further and higher education institutions, external funding bodies, development agencies, heads of library schools, heads of library services and local library managers.

The intended audiences are indicated at the end of each set of recommendations, which are grouped under nine thematic headings.

1. *Children as a Priority Group*

- 1.1 All government initiatives aimed at developing literacy and learning opportunities or other services for children and young people, should involve library services, acknowledging the contribution which they have already made and enabling them to contribute fully in the future.
- 1.2 As part of the outcomes of the Chancellor's Comprehensive Spending Review (July 2002):-
 - Investment should be made to ensure that, as part of the core service which children and young people can expect from their library service, every library service should be funded to provide:-
 - The Bookstart scheme for parents and babies
 - The Summer Reading Challenge
 - Out of Hours Study Support

These services should become an entitlement to support formal and informal learning opportunities for all children and young people.

In addition, Bookstart and related early years services provided by libraries should feature as an essential part of every Sure Start scheme and the proposed Children's Centres. Early and Family Literacy and Learning should be the focus for libraries' contribution.

- 1.3 Funding opportunities to enable library services to create safe and welcoming environments, with high quality bookstock and well developed ICT services, should be made available via identified Lottery funding streams, specifically targeted at improved standards of service to children and young people.

Recommendations

1.4 As part of the outcomes of the *Strategic Framework for Public Libraries*, which is being developed by DCMS, the needs of children and young people should be treated as a priority and the recommendations of this report should influence any potential for investment in public libraries, especially in relation to improvements in bookstock, opening hours, buildings, staffing and staff development and technology. The recommendations should also influence the future development of Annual Library Plans.

DCMS/DfES/ODP/NOF

2. *Cross-Sectoral Working to Benefit the Child*

2.1 The joint working arrangements set up between DCMS and DfES as a result of Empowering the Learning Community should be re-energised and issues raised in this report, which can be addressed by greater flexibility in cross-sectoral funding arrangements, especially in relation to the role of libraries in children's and young people's learning should be given specific consideration.

2.2 The proposed work with OFSTED, CILIP, SLA and ASCEL, on the development of school libraries, including pilot studies, should be actioned with immediate effect.

2.3 Cross-sectoral working to facilitate learning with a focus on pre-16 learners between school and public libraries and Further and Higher Education libraries, particularly in relation to technology and information literacy, should become a priority for the working party and should influence the next stage of the People's Network. Pilot projects should be set up to explore how partnerships can be fostered.

2.4 Learning and Skills Councils should, as matter of urgency, initiate research, guidance and training to enable librarians in the further education sector to support 14-19 year old learners with appropriate resources, environments and skills.

2.5 The training courses provided for both teachers and librarians whether at first professional level or as in-service training, should enable a better understanding of each others' roles and functions.

DCMS/Resource/DfEE/OFSTED/CILIP/SLA/ASCEL/Learning & Skills Councils/FE Colleges/HE Institutions

Recommendations

3. *A Quality Framework*

The principles contained in *Inspiring Learning for All*: the framework currently being developed by Resource should be translated into a specific document, which focuses on the provision of a common core service for children and young people, in each of the areas of the framework. Library services should be specifically required to demonstrate their commitment to these principles in their Annual Library Plan.

DCMS/Resource/Local Authority Members/Heads of Library Services

4. *Research into Needs and Impact*

4.1 The research which is currently being undertaken into the impact of museums, archives and libraries on learning, as part of the *Inspiring Learning Framework*, and the work to develop measures for the impact of reader development within *Their Reading Futures* should be used as models to develop impact measures across the board, in relation to library services to children and young people in and out of the formal learning situation.

4.2 The Start with the Child research should be updated regularly (every 3 years) to inform the future development of children's and young people's services and should be disseminated widely through the relevant professional bodies, conferences and workshops.

Resource/CILIP/Regional Agencies/SCL/ASCEL/YLG/SLG/SLA

5. *Disseminating Best Practice*

5.1 Resource and the Single Regional Agencies for Museums, Libraries and Archives should be charged with gathering together qualitative and quantitative outcomes from project based initiatives, locally and then nationally, to create an interactive database for collation, publication and proactive dissemination.

5.2 Government bodies, professional groups and national development agencies should focus on funding and delivery of research into the impact and outcomes of innovatory practice, dissemination of evidence and experience and the development of advocacy skills across all levels of the library world.

DCMS/Resource/Regional Agencies/CILIP/Heads of Library School/reading Development Agencies

Recommendations

6. *Transforming Services by Learning from Projects*

6.1 All funding agencies as part of their bid criteria, should place more emphasis on long term sustainability, which is achieved by embedding the learning outcomes of projects in mainstream services.

They should also encourage partnerships and cross-sectoral working rather than competitiveness by their funding criteria.

6.2 Library services, in seeking to achieve sustainability and succession strategies for time-limited projects, should challenge the status quo and make changes, no matter how small, to current practice rather than lose the lessons of entire projects when funding expires.

6.3 Library staff should be trained to develop a culture of learning and evaluating activity, measuring the impact of their services, sharing that learning with one another and advocating on the basis of that evidence.

DCMS/NOF/External Funders/Heads of Library Services/Library Managers

7. *Responding to the Diversity of Children's Needs*

7.1 The increasing diversity of cultures represented in our communities must be represented in the composition and training of library staff, the allocation of resources, the stock for children and young people and the library environment. Any Annual Library Plans which do not demonstrate a commitment to the needs of children and young people from socially excluded groups should not be accepted.

7.2 All staff working within a library service should receive basic training in relation to children's and young people's needs and customer care practices. The recruitment process for all new staff should include criteria which demand evidence of a positive attitude towards children and young people.

7.3 Appropriate training, support and networking opportunities should be offered to the new specialist posts, emerging from targeted projects, such as Early Years or Study Support workers, whatever their professional background or experience.

**DCMS/Heads of Library Schools/Teacher Training providers/
Regional Agencies/Local Authorities/Professional Bodies/Library Services**

Recommendations

8. *Consulting to Invest in Children*

- 8.1 All library services should re-examine their policies and procedures in the light of evidence that for many parents they present barriers to library use especially by socially excluded groups. In particular, the following areas should be given priority:-
- Joining procedures
 - Fines and payment for damaged books, especially for under-fives and children with special needs.
- 8.2 Opening hours should be reviewed, to examine the potential for a focus on after-school hours and weekends. The provision of on-line services should be increased to increase access.
- 8.3 The recommendation in *Investing in Children* that the percentage of bookfund dedicated to purchasing stock for children and young people should match the percentage of children and young people in the population served, should be revisited and extended to other heads of expenditure such as furniture and fittings.
- 8.4 Library services should actively involve children and young people in the design of the services offered to them, not as a one-off or adhoc gesture, but as an ongoing process, in relation to stock, services, opening hours, and procedures, using regular feedback processes such as focus groups. In particular strenuous efforts should be made to develop the use of libraries by children at Key Stage 2 and above, by listening to their views and developing stocks and services which respond to the youth culture of this age group. The more creative use of technology to deliver services is a priority for this age group.
- 8.5 Library services should review how they promote and market their services to children and young people and adopt a high quality and professional approach to the production of publicity materials and their marketing activity. In undertaking market research, greater focus should be given to non-users of services.

Local Authority Members/Heads of Library Services/Service Managers

Recommendations

9. *Partnerships to Deliver Outcomes*

- 9.1 Strong links should be made, if not already in place, between Bookstart and local Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships, and Bookstart should be used as the basis for the development of other early years services, to cultivate parental involvement and family literacy and learning.
- 9.2 Library service managers should learn the lessons of schemes such as Bookstart and Youth Boox to ensure that they exploit the potential to improve their services by working in partnership with other local authority departments and external agencies. This is particularly crucial in areas where the service is failing to reach its audience.

Heads of Library Service/Library Service Managers/Early Years Development & Childcare Partnerships

The needs of children and young people

There are 12 million children and young people up to the age of 16 in the UK, equaling 20% of the total population¹

Childhood is recognised as a time of development and rehearsal for adult life. As a child grows and matures, the influences of nature (genetic makeup) and nurture (environment and experience) develop and create the individual adult. These influences are made more complex by the range of changing social interactions which surround the child and its family. In modern society we have extended training and educational opportunities for young people and moved away from youth employment as the norm. The period of young people's economic dependence reaches well beyond the ages of physical and mental maturity, creating new tensions and needs. So, what is childhood in 21st century Britain, and what are children's needs?

I. Research Documents and Resources

Evidence from children and young people themselves is perhaps the most compelling source, and models which show perceived needs and how they might be met in a range of contexts also have their value.

The key research evidence for the current study has been a major research project commissioned by Resource in 2002, to support this review, entitled '*Start with the child*'². This study has analysed children's needs in relation to Bronfenbrenner's *Ecological Model of Child Development*. The model places the child at the centre of a complex environment of interacting factors all of which, to a greater or lesser extent, impact on behaviour.

'*Start with the Child*' has used the theoretical model as a basis for analysing primary evidence on children's views of their own interests and needs. This major piece of research provides powerful and convincing indicators of the needs and opinions of children and young people today. Other key research evidence of children's own views of their needs comes from '*Young People's Reading at the end of the century*'³ and '*Young Australians reading*'⁴, the largest and most significant analyses of children's reading tastes and opinions since Whitehead's study published in 1977⁵ or the *Books in Schools report* of 1992.⁶

In addition to the research evidence, explorations of children's needs have been implicit in a range of recent papers and reports. The Children's and Young People's Unit set up by Government in 2001, has identified a vision and a series of principles upon which, it suggests, all services for children and young people should be based⁷. The 'Schools Plus' Policy Advisory Team⁸, the 'Right to Read' project by the National Literacy Association⁹, and the 'Inspiring Learning' draft framework for access and learning developed in 2001 by Resource¹⁰ all place the assumed needs of children and young people or learners at the heart of their proposals. Combining recent research and evidence with longer standing statements such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child¹¹ provides a wealth of data. **While the research data provides generalised evidence about the needs of children and young people, the fundamental individualism of every child must never be forgotten.**

2. The Role of the Family

A strong message which emerges from the evidence is the continued importance of the role of the family in children's lives. Children need a stable, loving home environment in which to grow and thrive. Learning begins at home and parents and carers are the first and most enduring educators. Combine this with the importance of early development in childhood, and the key role of the family is abundantly clear:

'there is overwhelming evidence to demonstrate the contribution of learning in families to the emotional, cognitive and social development of individual members, particularly in the critical phase of early brain development'¹²

The influence of parents continues throughout childhood, even in to the teenage years when young people are beginning to rebel against family constraints, and to establish their individualism. Parental influence remains strong and families provide important emotional support and encouragement to the individual young person. This has obvious and crucial implications for the role of reading and libraries; particularly in the early years, but also throughout childhood and adolescence.

The wider context

Every child is an individual and is affected by a unique set of cultural and social experiences. As the 'Start with the Child' research confirms, children's development is related closely to their cultural context, and is complex and individual, and constantly dynamic¹³. In Britain today, children live in a variety of contexts, ranging from urban to rural settings, and are affected by a variety of different cultural influences. While the social and cultural context has changed for all children and young people since 1995, that is not to say that it is the same for all, or that the changes have been the same for all. The importance of recognising and responding to the differing needs of children from these different backgrounds and experiences cannot be overestimated.

While the family is key, children's needs and development are affected by the wider political, social, economic and cultural context. As well as the traditional needs of literacy and numeracy, young people need to develop computer and information literacy to be able to participate fully in today's society. They need especially to be able to cope with the rapid pace of social and technological change and need to learn the skills to participate and to promote tolerance and inclusion in a rapidly changing world.

The basic needs of children may have not changed much in the past seven years, but the world has changed around them. In particular family structures have changed considerably. Many families continue to suffer poverty or instability which can undermine children's and young people's positive view of the world.

The needs of children and young people

In 2001, around 2 million children were living in households where no adult was in work¹⁴

In 2000, over 4 million children (nearly one in three) lived in households with incomes below the poverty line¹⁵

1 in 4 children are affected by divorce before the age of 16¹⁶

Children and young people in the 21st century continue to have the same fundamental needs for food, safety, belonging, self-esteem and understanding as outlined by Maslow.¹⁷ But new needs have emerged in the present day's technological, diverse and rapidly changing society. **This places a stronger emphasis on the need for good communication and interaction, and the need to cope with the conflicting pressures of commercialism, marketing, educational aspirations, job opportunities and career choices, as well as the variety of pressures around relationships with friends and the instinct to find a partner.** An example of these new pressures has been the development of the so-called 'Tweenies' market of 7- 12 year old girls, highly fashion conscious and identified by a pre-teen culture which includes music, clothes, toys, and hobbies, all influencing this group's consumer choices and range of leisure activities. At the same time, society needs children to develop and grow securely and successfully. **Poor literacy and numeracy is reflected in higher levels of unemployment.**

*Around 1 in 4 19 year olds lacked a basic level qualification in 2001¹⁸
42% of young offenders have been excluded from school, and a further 2.3% were habitual truants.¹⁹*

50% of prison inmates have difficulty with reading, writing and maths.²⁰

3. Needs in Common

The Children's and Young People's Unit have summarised these needs in their draft Outcomes for children's services²¹, as

- *health and well-being*
- *achievement and enjoyment*
- *participation and citizenship*
- *protection*
- *responsibility*
- *inclusion*

The dependence of young children on their parents and carers, but the increasingly young age at which children experiment with separation from parental influence, seek to join a peer groups or gangs to demonstrate their identity (pre-teen) and then move to more individualism as they navigate the teenage years, all have considerable implications for library services. While children are individuals and all develop at an individual pace and in individual ways, some broad generalisations of developmental needs can be identified.

The needs of children and young people

Theorists argue that children have naturally strong primary needs for food, shelter and a stable, loving environment in which to grow and develop. In addition the research shows that all children need to be talked to in order to develop language and the ability to communicate. They also need to feel self-esteem and to develop their own sense of individual identity.

In terms of learning, they need physical activity to stimulate body and brain activity, and are helped by humour and the ability to laugh. **They need environments which enable experimentation, exploration, manipulation and learning by discovery. They need opportunities to learn in different ways, have different experiences and they need educational chances and support to achieve their full potential.** Socially, the research shows they need safe and welcoming spaces to meet their friends, socialise, and follow their interests, and the encouragement to do so. They need to wait until they are adults to be able to be independent, but are in fact capable of contributing and participating as individuals much earlier than this. **To do this they need to be listened to and offered the chance to participate and contribute ideas and effort. They need the chance to make choices, and to exercise a degree of power over their environment. They need to be treated as individuals, although they often present themselves to others as groups.** This has particular implications for the way in which libraries consult with and involve children and young people in service development.

Economically, whilst today's young people lack the financial independence of adults, they are nevertheless becoming consumers, with limited purchasing power, and are increasingly concerned with the material possessions which relate to their own youth culture (e.g. fashion accessories, mobile phones). **They need to know that libraries are free to use, as the assumption amongst many of them as young consumers, is that payment is required.**

The characteristics and needs of younger children

In addition, younger children are particularly dependent on parents and carers, have a limited circle of friends and range of experience and need stimulation to actively promote growth of brain capacity and imagination and curiosity. Even quite young children already recognise that school is a place to study and the research shows they make assumptions that it is not therefore a place to have fun. The library, on the other hand, is a young child's first directly received public service and here, learning and interaction with adults, including parents should be fun.

The characteristics and needs of older children, pre-teens and younger teenagers

At these stages, along with their common needs, young people need to develop more friendship bonds and peer group support. They want to 'fit in' with their peers, although individual choice and preferences are beginning to emerge quite strongly. As they grow, young people need to start to separate themselves from their parents and carers and experiment with their own identity in groups and gangs, and begin to develop relationships with adults other than their parents. **They need opportunities to experience different perspectives, and to consider alternative approaches and opinions to those with which they have grown up.** They especially need support in dealing with the range of physical and sexual changes that take place round puberty.

The needs of children and young people

At the same time the evidence is that they feel pressured to succeed at school and need somewhere to study and do homework. They are also becoming increasingly consumerist and materialistic.

The characteristics and needs of older teenagers and young adults

As young people develop further they naturally embrace more challenges. In terms of learning development they need opportunities to exercise complex cognitive abilities, and complex speech and language skills. As they grow they want to move away from family dependence but are often unable to do so through their dependence on home for transport and money. Conflicts can and do develop as they are expected to act like adults, want to express themselves as young people, but are often treated as children. **At this stage they need to develop adult style social networks, need their own space to 'hang out' with friends, and are increasingly aware that most adults project a negative view of teenagers.** At the same time they are developing concerns about society and the environment, worry about their own future and about financial matters, and are often affected by fear of future relationship problems (especially those that come from broken homes).

10 - 20% of young people will suffer mental health problems which need specialist treatment²²

30% of teenagers described themselves as 'stressed' or 'depressed' in a 1997 survey²³

4. Educational needs

In terms of education, children and young people have a specific range of needs which need to be met if they are to have the opportunity to fulfil their potential. **For example they need to learn to read and to see reading as associated with success not failure. They need to develop information literacy, the ability to deal with the increasing range and quantity of information in order to use it effectively to keep themselves adequately informed throughout life, and make the numerous life choices they will face.**

The Resource *Learning and Access Framework*²⁴ asserts that learning takes place when some kind of personal change occurs in response to a situation or an experience. Children need positive educational experiences in which they feel engaged and involved, to enable them to get the best from life, and to gain qualifications to assist with getting a job. **To achieve this they need opportunities to learn in different ways, including via the multiple intelligencies (linguistic, musical, spatial, interpersonal etc.) as outlined in the work of Howard Gardner.**²⁵

Fundamentally, all children's educational needs are similar, and although there are clearly individual differences requiring different emphasis, all children have the right to high expectations, and the need for equal opportunities in education and to support and encouragement from others to help them to achieve their potential. They all need to develop:

- *knowledge*
- *motivation and self esteem*

- *employability skills*
- *communication and interaction skills*
- *cultural tolerance and understanding*
- *social responsibility and participation*
- *positive attitudes towards inclusion in a world of rapid change*

5. Technological needs

Children are generally keen to work with and experiment with new media. **In doing this, they need to be able to cope with rapidly changing technology, and need good and easy access to equipment²⁶. Computer ownership in families is considerable, but levels of access are lower in poorer homes, and where there is more than one child.** There is evidence that young people enjoy using computers for information and leisure, and yet need considerable skill development and support in order to make best use of the range of information available for example over the internet²⁷

The *Start with the Child* research reveals that the influence of technology is stronger than perhaps we imagined. **It demonstrates that children feel part of the internet and do not see information technology as something they are aside or apart from. This must make it a natural learning environment for them, but not until access is universal and comprehensive.** Even so, children from all the age groups interviewed thought computers were exciting or important, and most made regular use of them for games and or information. There was a distinct message that children are keen on and want opportunities to use and exploit technology. Similarly, the Resource Inspiring Learning framework recognises that people of all ages appear keen to exploit and use new media. To engage them we need to be part of the e-learning revolution.

In 2001,
99% of children had used computers
75% used them at home
64% had the internet at home (41% in social grades D and E)
38% of KS 1 and 2 children did not have a computer at home and accessed one instead at either a friend's house (33%) or at a library (5%)
Of the KS 3 and 4 children without a home computer, 34% used one at a friend's house, 17% used a public library, 4% an internet cafe, 2% a workplace, and 2% a parent's workplace²⁹

The 'Start with the child' research discovered that computer ownership was considerable amongst all ages:

Children 5-7 years: 54% had internet access, 11% had a computer in their own room
Children 7-11 years: 61% had internet access, 14% had a computer in their own room
Children 11-14 years: 64% had internet access, 19% had a computer in their own room
Young people 14-16yrs: 72% had internet access, 27% had a computer in their own room

The needs of children and young people

In addition, the ownership and use of games consoles, videos and televisions, and mobile phones indicates a world in which technology is part and parcel of every young person's experience and strongly influences their recreational and cultural tastes and preferences.

6. Cultural and Recreational Needs

The research also identifies clear trends in the cultural and recreational needs of children in the twenty-first century. **The preference for television and video over other forms of entertainment has increased markedly.** Research into family life by MORI on behalf of Nestle UK in 1999 revealed that 61% of 16 - 24 year olds preferred watching television to reading a book.³⁰ **Nevertheless we have known for some time that young people with poor reading skills are severely disadvantaged.**

'those with poor writing and reading skills are more likely to be unemployed and to have health and social problems such as depression and problems with relationships'³¹

It is clear from the research that the culture of children and young people is not the same as the traditional definition of the term 'culture'. **Youth culture equals popular culture, with the emphasis on popular music, fashion, consumer goods, new technology and informality.** At the same time, society has developed a new informality and decline in deference, to which many institutions have not yet adequately responded. **Anyone wishing to engage with young people's culture needs to embrace this definition of culture and recreation.** The *Start with the Child* research shows that children and young people need their culture to be:

- *fun, satisfying and rewarding*
- *participative and helpful in providing new skills*
- *relaxing, and offered in a comfortable and safe environment*
- *exciting and motivating*
- *accessible, cheap and easy to take part in*
- *well taught or presented, with personal attention and support*
- *accepted by family and friends, and contributing to their positive self-image*

The evidence is that children and young people will see services which fail to reflect their cultural values, as increasingly irrelevant to their needs.

Libraries and other recreational and cultural services need to take note of these findings.

7. Reading needs

Contrary to popular belief, children enjoy reading. Research into the reading habits of young people aged 10 - 18 in Australia in 2000 showed that 79% of those interviewed had positive attitudes to reading.³² Only 21% saw reading as irrelevant or not part of their recreational interests. The research showed the drop off in reading for recreation in the secondary years which has been a long-recognised phenomenon. Even so, 8 out of 10 pupils agree that books are exciting and

The needs of children and young people

interesting, that they help them to understand things about life (79%) and that they are a good way to escape(71%). This bears out the evidence of the Roehampton Institute's research of 1996 which demonstrated that over one-third of 11-16s spent over 3 hours a week reading fiction each week.³³

In terms of the fundamental need to learn the skill of reading, the research evidence shows that **children need access to a wide range of books and appropriate reading material – a book and print-rich environment to stimulate more reading. They need to be read to, in order to experience literature which is beyond their own reading ability, and they need help and guidance in selecting reading books and other material. They need opportunities to talk about their reading. The support of an interested adult who knows about appropriate books can be of enormous encouragement.** They need time to read in school and at home, and appropriate books to support their individual interests and choices. Support and help from parents and carers to access and find the books and reading material that will stimulate and interest them is valuable in encouraging reading, as is the opportunity to buy and own books of their own. They benefit from reading role models, preferably both men and women, who demonstrate the value and rewards of reading and who value the books which children are reading too. They need the opportunity and encouragement to experience reading as a leisure activity out of school. It is also evident that they are assisted in becoming readers through attractive book presentation and positive marketing, and by having access to a reading haven devoted to their specific age group in bookshops and libraries.

8. Library Needs

In terms of libraries, the *Start with the Child* research into children and young people in 2002 demonstrates that children need:

Appropriate environments and services:

- safe and welcoming environments with spaces which support diverse activities and provide a haven for users of different ages
- technology to support and develop reading and access to information
- impressive and interactive displays , activities and exhibitions
- libraries that are more like shops, which they want to visit, and where they want to 'hang out'
- a welcome when in groups, and to be treated with respect as individuals

Services that are relevant and responsive

- libraries that are open when they need them and can access them (evenings, weekends) opportunities to take responsibility, and exercise freedom of choice
- recognition of their pop culture and materials which are relevant to their interests and self image
- recognition of their varied learning needs and materials, services and space to meet these needs
- opportunities to participate and be involved in the planning and delivery of services, to provide feedback and have their ideas listened to and acted upon

Appropriate help for children and young people and for those who support them

- staff who have the time and skills to assist and support them in making best use of the service
- staff who are interested in their literature and reading, and can share ideas and encourage them to read new things and in new ways
- support for parents and carers in helping their children
- recognition that every individual is unique, with a unique combination of needs.
- resources targeted to meet particular needs, and changes in the nature of mainstream services where necessary to foster and achieve inclusiveness.

Support from the community at large to use and benefit from services

- services that are marketed to the them and their parents
- work outside the library to promote the benefits of library use through a range of partners, especially in order to reach hard-to-reach groups and individuals
- a holistic 'joined up' approach by services, to meet their needs as individuals
- partnerships with schools, libraries, pre-school settings and bookshops to promote book ownership and use

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- ¹ *Social Trends*, The Stationery Office, London, 2002.
- ² *Start with the child: the needs, motivation and attitudes of children and young people*. Morris, Hargreaves and McIntyre. London; Resource, 2002.
- ³ *Young people's reading at the end of the century: focus on pupils with special educational needs*. Susan Hancock, Jenny Kendrick, Kimberley Reynolds. London; Roehampton Institute, 1999.
- ⁴ *Young Australians reading from keen to reluctant readers*, research prepared by Woolcott Research Pty Ltd for the Australian Centre for Youth Literature and the Australian Council, 2000.
<http://www.ozco.gov.au/resources/publications/research/yar/>
- ⁵ *Children and their books* [Schools Council Research Project on Children's Reading Habits, 10-15], F.Whitehead et al. Basingstoke, MacMillan, 1977.
- ⁶ *Books in schools*, Book Marketing Council, 1992.
- ⁷ *Tomorrow's future: building a strategy for children and young people*. Children and Young People's Unit, 2001.
www.cypu.gov.uk.
- ⁸ *Schools PLUS: report of Policy Action Team 11*, Social Inclusion Unit, 2000.
www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/seu/publications/reports/html/compendium/11.htm.
- ⁹ *Right to read*, National Literacy Association, Who Cares Trust and Paul Hamlyn Foundation, 2001.
- ¹⁰ *Inspiring learning: a framework for access and learning in Museums, Archives and Libraries*. London; Resource, 2001.
- ¹¹ *United Nations convention on the rights of the child*, 1989 www.unicef.org/crc/
- ¹² *Social Trends*, 2002.
- ¹³ *Start with the child*, 2002.
- ¹⁴ *Start with the child*, 2002.
- ¹⁵ *Monitoring poverty and social exclusion 2001*, Mohibur Rahman. Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2001.
- ¹⁶ *Social Trends*, 2002.
- ¹⁷ *Motivation and personality*. Abraham Maslow. London; Harper & Row, 1987.
- ¹⁸ *All our futures: creativity culture and education*, Great Britain. National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education. DfEE, 1999.
- ¹⁹ *Right to read*, 2001.
- ²⁰ *Right to read*, 2001
- ²¹ *Tomorrow's future: building a strategy for children and young people*, 2001. www.cypu.gov.uk.
- ²² *Start with the child*, 2002.
- ²³ *Start with the child*, 2002.
- ²⁴ *Inspiring learning: a framework for access and learning in museums, archives and libraries*, 2001.
- ²⁵ *Frames of mind :the theory of multiple intelligences*, Howard Gardner: London; Fontana, 1993.
- ²⁶ *All our futures: creativity, culture and education*, 1999.
- ²⁷ 'Towards information empowerment?' David Streatfield, *Assignment*, 14 (2) January 1997.
- ²⁸ *Inspiring learning: a framework for access and learning in museums, archives and libraries*, 2001.
- ²⁹ *Young people and ICT: findings from a survey conducted in Autumn 2001*, NGfL Research and Evaluation series, DES
- ³⁰ *Aspects of education in Britain today: reading and the family*, Nestle Family Monitor No. 6, June 1999.
- ³¹ *Basic Skills Agency research*, 1993
- ³² *Young Australians Reading, from keen to reluctant readers*, 2000.
- ³³ *Young people's reading at the end of the century*. London; Roehampton Institute, 1996.

“Learning is a process of active engagement with experience. It is what people do when they want to make sense of the world. It may involve an increase in skills, knowledge, understanding, values and the capacity to reflect. Effective learning leads to change, development and a desire to learn more.”

Definition of learning, Campaign for Learning¹

Libraries have a unique role in supporting children’s learning. As the *Start with the Child*² research demonstrates, children need to develop their own interests, they value their individuality, they want their own space. Libraries can deliver on all these fronts, providing a safe, welcoming environment to support learning both formally and informally.

Since the publication of *Investing in Children*³ in 1995, there have been significant changes within schools, public libraries, and schools library services. Politically libraries are enjoying a higher profile and their value is being recognised, particularly in delivering key government priorities around access to ICT, lifelong learning and social inclusion. Library services have to meet the challenge of Best Value and the Public Library Standards. More funding streams are available for libraries, albeit usually via competitive bidding processes. Study support and homework clubs proliferate, along with high quality and imaginative national reader development initiatives.

I. Libraries as the Champion of the Learner

For many years librarians have advocated the importance of working with children from the earliest age to familiarise them with books, develop their language skills, help them make sense of the world and give them a head start when beginning school. There is now a considerable weight of evidence to support the importance of this work. The first few years of a child’s life are crucial for laying the foundations for their learning and development throughout the rest of their life, for creating lifelong learners.

This realisation of the importance of early years development has been mirrored by a growth in government and other initiatives including the creation of Early Years Childcare and Development Partnerships (EYCDPs), Sure Start schemes, Early Learning Goals, and Bookstart. The government’s draft *Strategy for Children and Young People*⁴ is at pains to emphasise the importance of enabling children to reach their full potential. The vital role that public libraries can and should play is increasingly being recognised – the Sure Start target for increasing active library membership for children under four being a prime example. Following the reduction in the numbers of children’s specialists during the 1990s there is now an increasing number of posts for designated early years specialists, although these are supported largely by non-core funding.

The longitudinal research project, the *Effective Provision of Pre-School Education* (EPPE)⁵, sponsored by the DfES and being undertaken by Oxford, Cardiff and London Universities, has recently published findings that emphasise the importance of activities for pre-school children which linked to the development of their numeracy and literacy skills. They have found that those children who are taught rhymes, songs, letters and numbers, and who are taken frequently to the library, are

more likely to thrive at school. However, the role played by public libraries in providing regular under 5s activities and storytimes as well as work with parents and carers has not been recognised adequately, even though libraries are effectively the only holistic cradle to grave service, capable of supporting a national literacy strategy.

Special Needs

There is a perception that the needs of children with special educational needs (SEN) are not fully understood nor being responded to adequately by libraries. Children with special needs have particular issues around access – not just physical access but also opening hours and greater support from library staff. Research by the Roehampton Institute⁶ found that young people with special educational needs both buy and borrow fewer books than their peers, are less likely to have books bought for them and are more dependent on professional guidance, wanting more help choosing books. This has proved to be a strength, as they then tend to be more satisfied with their choice. They are more attracted to comics and magazines than their peers and 55% of them, as opposed to 45% of their peers, use non-fiction, possibly because of the greater use of illustrations. There is a need for further research into the library needs of SEN children. There are also issues about staff training for work with children who have special needs.

The voluntary organisations involved in delivering services to visually impaired children have undertaken research which can act as an exemplar of the problems. Research by the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB)⁷ shows that visually impaired children are not receiving adequate support in terms of learning and reading resources. The barriers to their progress include lack of information in accessible formats, despite the strictures of the Disability Discrimination Act and other legislation.

After one year of print publication, only 6% of children's fiction titles and less than 1% of non-fiction titles are available in any alternative accessible format⁸

The cost of Braille resources for one child for the core curriculum for years 7-11 is calculated by the RNIB to be anything from £184,000-£285,000 and since 70% of visually impaired children are educated in mainstream schools, there are currently few opportunities for economies of scale. However, there are also many visually impaired young people who do not use Braille and for them more research into the use of CCTV and Kurzweil and other reading machines is needed.

The complexities of the Copyright legislation also impede any rapid progress, although a new Bill is currently going through Parliament. Add to this equation, the fact that existing voluntary sector services are very inadequate and fragmented and therefore public funding cannot be used effectively because there is no proper infrastructure, and it is easy to see why provision and development of accessible materials is so difficult.

The need for a national agency, a partnership between government and the voluntary sector, is one possible solution and a proposal from a group of national agencies working for visually impaired people is currently in preparation.

2. Libraries Making Lifelong Learners

The Bookstart initiative

The Bookstart initiative, piloted in Birmingham in the early 1990's, encourages parents and carers to use books with babies and very young children. A free pack containing two books, a booklist, a placemat printed with nursery rhymes and an invitation to join the local library, was given out by health visitors to parents bringing their children for the 6-8 month health check. The scheme was subsequently sponsored nationally by Sainsburys, and managed by Booktrust, with 92% of all library authorities across the UK signing up. This sponsorship came to an end in 2000. Since then funding has been secured from the Scottish Executive and from the Northern Ireland Assembly. Bookstart in Wales is funded by the Welsh National Assembly, as part of their Basic Skills Strategy for Wales. In England the government has committed itself to taking up the funding fully from 2004 with NOF resources, and there has been interim support from the DCMS and the DfES. However this has been at lower levels and the scheme is now somewhat fragmented despite the efforts of the Book Trust and library authorities to find alternative means to bridge the gap.

The evaluation of the initial Birmingham scheme⁹ was based on a small group of families, who were tracked until the children started school. The research showed that the Bookstart babies, on reaching school, scored higher in baseline assessments than the control group in both English and mathematics. Although the increase in mathematics scores was marginal, it does underline the huge potential for Bookstart to prepare children for the formal learning environment they will encounter on starting school.

Later evaluation of the Sainsburys Bookstart scheme by the University of Surrey¹⁰, showed that Bookstart was instrumental in changing parental attitudes and behaviour with regard to using books with very young children:

"...significant numbers [of parents and carers] felt that Bookstart had converted awareness and good intentions into action and good practice"

Recommendations, made in the report, include making Bookstart the first stage in a national strategy for literacy, strengthening links between health visitors and librarians and promoting the understanding and exploitation of the role Bookstart plays in speech and language development. It also recommends that the high quality of presentation of the packs be maintained.

The evaluation of the Sainsburys Bookstart has not tracked children through to starting school but, notwithstanding, both the Birmingham pilot and the Sainsburys scheme have clearly demonstrated the contribution that libraries, working in partnership with other agencies, can make.

Despite anecdotal evidence from some library professionals that Bookstart does not appear to deliver the substantial increases in library use that had been hoped for, possibly due to the deterrent factors of fines and worries about damage to library books, the evaluation nonetheless points to increased library membership.

Bookstart has been proven to work well in those authorities which have developed strategies to build on the initiative, rather than seeing the giving of the pack as an end in itself. Bookstart is most effective when used as a 'hook' onto which other services can be added, such as special welcome sessions in libraries, regular storytimes and other activities which encourage parents to use the library and build their skills and confidence in using books with their children. Bookstart is also excellent as a way of getting parents to come into the library and to get across the message that all members of the family are welcome.

Sure Start¹¹, a government programme introduced in 1999 in England, aims to tackle child poverty and social inclusion in an holistic way. It looks at ways of improving, not only educational opportunities for pre-school children, but also the health, and social and emotional welfare of children, to provide them a better start when they begin school. By 2004 the government will have 500 Sure Start programmes running, concentrated in areas of high social deprivation. Crucially for libraries, as a result of the 2000 Spending Review, one of the delivery targets for the third objective of Sure Start ("Improving the Ability to Learn") is a rise in the active membership of the local library by children under four. This is a welcome indication that the role played by libraries in educational development is being recognised beyond the library community.

Many library authorities are working closely with Sure Start schemes, and gaining funding for early years workers, additional mobile services and for supporting Bookstart in Sure Start areas. In Wakefield, Sure Start has funded the Sunshine Library, the first designated early years library in the country. Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have initiated their own Sure Start programmes with lower overall expenditure but offering similar opportunities for partnership working.

The challenge of mainstreaming the best practice developed by Sure Start beyond the initial target areas presents libraries with an additional opportunity. Having been seen as successful deliverers in Sure Start areas their universal presence makes them ideal agents for spreading good practice, as the scheme develops over the coming years, via funding guaranteed by the 2002 Spending Review.

Information literacy

Participation in the information society requires the citizen to be information literate. Failure to appraise information and a lack of confidence in the use of information, in whatever format, will result in exclusion. Libraries again have a key role to play in its development.

In the UK there is not yet a coherent approach to the issues of information literacy, although the Scottish school library standards produced by COSLA¹² use the Scottish curriculum's information and study skills programme as a key document and there are many references to information literacy and research skills in the National Curriculum and the National Literacy Strategy. There is a need to build on these, in particular, the information retrieval unit, as part of the Key Stage 3 strategy and develop a truly cross-curriculum approach. Models within the FE and HE library communities are not widely known in the children's and school's library sectors, and this is an area where cross-sectoral working would be extremely valuable. There is

no one agreed definition of information literacy, although the definition formulated by the American Library Association provides good starting point:

“Information literacy is the ability to access, evaluate and use information from a variety of sources”¹³.

Some commentators have extended this to include such issues as:

- the recognition of the need for information
- evaluation and selection
- awareness of issues around accuracy and bias

Research in Australia has identified information literacy as one of the five key elements in the profile of a lifelong learner. With the increase in access to ICT in both schools and public libraries, information literacy is becoming a major concern¹⁴. The US Department of Education’s National Technology Plan lists technology and information literacy skills as one of its five goals for students¹⁵. Other research has also highlighted the need to train children to use information critically, particularly where the internet is concerned¹⁶. The Roehampton reading research¹⁷ identified computers as taking over from books in the information sector, which they attribute to the increased availability of computers in the home. 72% of boys and 69% of girls in the survey said that they often look for information on the Internet. The UCE research on resource-based learning identified the need for children to be skilled in using ICT resources to support this kind of learning. Children’s literacy needs are increasingly linked with new technology and libraries and education providers need to develop strategies together for supporting information literacy skills, particularly for those children with little or no access to ICT at home.

Excellent innovative projects exist in isolation. The information handling programme designed and delivered by library staff at Dixons City Technology College in Bradford was evaluated by Pricewaterhouse Coopers as part of a DfES survey into innovation in CTCs. It noted that the programme had impacted on pupil achievement, had boosted the quality of teaching and increased teacher morale¹⁸.

The government, through the New Opportunities Fund, has made funding available for the training of teachers and librarians in ICT skills. This is a welcome opportunity for library staff to gain new skills although there is a danger that the information literacy element will be overshadowed by the mechanics of ICT skills. A commitment to “digital literacy” is increasingly being confused with a broad multi-media approach to information literacy¹⁹. Additional research has been called for into the need for more understanding of the skills involved in information handling and a mutual understanding of how the library and teaching professions can support each other²⁰.

The development of information literacy skills needs to be synthesized and sustained across the variety of library sectors which support the learner. Early years library staff, public library staff as well as schools, FE and HE have key roles to play. Approaches need to be co-ordinated and strategies integrated. At present few secondary school libraries try to build on what has been developed at primary level, and few colleges have an awareness of how information skills have already been taught to their students. Different approaches at different levels fail to build on past

achievements. Until there is a consensus approach, libraries will fail to realise their potential in spreading mass information literacy. CILIP's Policy Action Group has already identified the need for an increased focus within the library sector on information literacy as part of a National Information Policy²¹.

Supporting parents and carers

The majority of children aged between 12 to 16 consider their parents to be the strongest learning influence in their lives (MORI 2000²²). Set this against the fact the only 15% of children's waking life is spent in school and the importance of the family in supporting their development and learning becomes apparent. There is also firm evidence that children of parents with low literacy and numeracy skills, are likely to have similar problems themselves.

"What parents do is critically important. Parents who have no educational qualifications can still do many things to help their children. We need to encourage parents...to play with children and talk to them"

Professor Pam Sammons, Institute of Education²³

"poor literacy and numeracy skills often run in the family – parents with poor literacy and numeracy skills are more likely to have children with similar difficulties.... In order to break this generational cycle of under-achievement, we must ensure that we are working with parents – as well as with grandparents and other primary carers – to support literacy and numeracy activities with their children"

Skills for Life: National Strategy for Improving Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills²⁴

There have been a range of reports and initiatives recognising the importance of family learning. The Government Green Paper, *The Learning Age*²⁵ stated:

"We want to encourage families to learn together. The National Year of Reading will help in this, and our new Early Excellence Centres will promote parenting, family learning and adult education and training, supported by childcare."

Each year, many library authorities are involved in family learning activities, in support of Family Learning Weekend. Generally, library activity reflects the trend in family learning, that focuses on early years and Key Stage One and there is less work directed at older children and their parents and carers. There are exceptions to this. Hampshire's Dads and Lads reaches teenage boys and their fathers (along with other family members) and proves that it is possible to engage both of these groups in reading.

The National Strategy for Improving Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills²² aims to have helped 60,000 parents improve their literacy and numeracy skills by 2004: **The strategy flags up work to be done with partners such as schools, Sure Start**

projects, Learning and Skills Councils, the Health Service, Probation Service and Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships, but omits libraries. However, parents seem to have a clear view of the library's role.

“When parents were asked what community resources supported their children's learning, the public library was the most common response”²⁶

Within the library world there has been a growth in general family learning initiatives, some aimed at supporting parents in developing their own literacy skills, some at skilling parents in helping their children to learn to read.

Whilst the Children, Access and Learning report identifies that parents are generally aware of the role of libraries in supporting learning this is not always translated into action. The report also states that public libraries are not the first choice of many parents and children for homework support. As stated in the recent Audit Commission report²⁵, libraries need to improve their marketing of services, particularly with non-users, making both parents and children more aware of the full range of services on offer.

Both the Bookstart research and Surestart objectives underline the importance of supporting the whole family in order to support the child:

“Many parents were originally unaware of the value of sharing books and other reading materials with babies as they thought babies were too young”

Evaluation into Sainsburys Bookstart²⁸

Bookstart research highlights the belief, prevalent amongst adults, that babies are too young to benefit from sharing books but encouragingly also points to a change of attitude following receipt of the Bookstart pack. Additional benefits for the older siblings of Bookstart babies through the increased prominence of books and reading in the home have become apparent.

The EPPE research²⁹ indicates the importance of involving and motivating parents and carers, particularly to help overcome disadvantage to children of parents with low education achievement. Whilst the education of the parents has a bearing on the child's development, more important still is to encourage parents, regardless of their own educational qualifications, to spend time with their children, talking to them, reading to them playing learning games and making use of library services.

3. Learning: A Quality of Life Issue

Formal learning

While the primary focus of school libraries and school library services is to support the teaching and learning of the National Curriculum, all libraries have an additional role in fostering the enjoyment of learning and broadening and supporting the learning experience in a more holistic sense. With the emphasis from government very clearly focused on formal learning, targets and inspections, libraries have a duty

to support parents and schools in ensuring that children's wider learning needs are recognised and encouraged.

Effects of national policies and strategies

The National Literacy Strategy³⁰ introduced the Literacy Hour in 1997, subsequently followed by the introduction of a complementary Numeracy Hour. Following the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy at Key Stage 1 and 2, there was anecdotal evidence suggesting a reduction in class visits to local public libraries. Initially, the National Literacy Strategy does not make specific recommendations about the use of public libraries and, ironically, it may have resulted in less emphasis on independent reading, as teachers stressed the shared text, but increasingly teachers and policy makers are recognising that broader experiences actively improve achievement in English and Maths. There are also concerns that the literacy hour is not encouraging leisure reading. The broader reading promotions encouraged to support the Strategy (such as the National Year of Reading) have presented libraries with significant opportunities for new activity. The extension of the Literacy Strategy to Key Stage 3 explicitly includes units on library use and has allowed many school libraries to assert their role in supporting literacy across the curriculum.

The Strategy has acknowledged the important contribution of school libraries and librarians. A training module³¹ has been provided to encourage a better understanding of the role of the library amongst teaching staff and guidance for the second year of the Strategy includes a prominent role for the school library³². Simultaneous growth in the number of school librarians reflects this developing role.

A major piece of research, undertaken by the University of Central England (UCE), and sponsored by Resource³³ has applauded the move to research based / independent study, but has raised concerns that this could disadvantage some children more than others if they are not given the necessary skills to cope with this approach. This type of resource based or project working demands, not just access to resources themselves, but also the skills to use them effectively. It is seen as fostering independence, ownership and a sense of empowerment in children, giving them personal responsibility for a specific piece of work but also as potentially disadvantaging. **The research is critical of the lack of co-operation between education agencies, stating that it found "little evidence of formal partnership working between public libraries, schools, school library services, museums, religious organisations and other agencies at a practical level". Among the barriers identified to library use were opening hours (one parent pointed out that the public library was closed by the time they came home from work), access, particularly in rural areas, and charges.** The report recommends a raft of solutions to the situation, some of which are targeted at library services, including on-line access to librarians to give specialist help, better marketing of services, development of better links with other agencies and public library access points in shops, post offices or other places within local communities.

4. The Importance of Informal Learning

The pleasure principle: informal learning, reading and achievement

“ Research shows that children need access to a wide range of meaningful and stimulating reading materials to move beyond the mechanics to the joys of wider reading”

Judith Elkin, *Focus on the Child*³⁴

With the increased emphasis on formal learning there has been a danger of losing sight of the importance of motivating children beyond the confines of curriculum, supporting their individual interests and developing reading and learning as pleasurable experiences. There is now a growing recognition of this risk in the education world.

The *Start with the Child* research³⁵ highlights the importance for libraries of supporting informal learning. Children in the 7-11 age range in particular are beginning to assert their independence. 11-14 year olds demand their own dedicated space. Both age ranges are developing their individual interests and passions. Supporting children in developing these interests is a key role for public libraries both by providing access to a wide range of materials, in a safe and welcoming environment, and by providing a range of activities to encourage children to develop their own interests.

Reader Development

A survey into reading habits, undertaken by the University of Surrey in 2001 and comparing with a similar survey completed in 1996, has uncovered a decline in the number of children describing themselves as enthusiastic readers. Interest in reading fiction declines significantly beyond Key Stage 2 (72% of girls and 71% of boys say they read fiction ‘often or very often’ at KS 2 compared with only 38% of girls and 18% of boys at KS 3 and 4). The summary of the findings states:

“A great deal is being done to encourage a general level of competency in reading and writing; perhaps more work is needed on enthusing readers, something which seems to be slipping backwards rather than gaining ground”³⁶

The response from libraries has been the growth in reader development initiatives, aimed at stimulating interest in reading and broadening people’s horizons beyond the safe and predictable choices. This is particularly important for children, in the face of competition for their interest from television, play station games, and videos. *Their Reading Futures*, a programme aimed at expanding and improving reader development with children through training, advocacy and awareness raising, has been set up by LaunchPad in partnership with the Arts Council of England, ASCEL, YLG, CILIP and Books for Students. The advent of the new Reading Agency, merging LaunchPad, Well Worth Reading and the Reading Partnership into one body, has huge potential for raising awareness of the importance of libraries’ work in promoting reading for pleasure.

Over the last few years, in response to the growing interest in literacy and attainment and initiatives such as the National Year of Reading, libraries have moved away from purely craft and entertainment activities for children to events specifically related to reading. This is most clearly illustrated by the national summer reading challenges, introduced by LaunchPad in 1999, which have gone from strength to strength and demonstrate the contribution that libraries can make, not only to formal learning goals by addressing the decline in literacy levels experienced by many children during the long summer break, but also to encouraging children to enjoy reading in a supportive and participative environment. Key to the success of the reading challenges has been the exploitation of children's passion for collecting (reaffirmed by the *Start with the Child* research), which has encouraged children to sustain their reading to reach the requisite six books read, and the high quality of the production and the marketing input into design and delivery.

"It's important that reading is promoted in libraries in a professional way with high quality materials. The well-intentioned but rather piecemeal projects of the past, with photocopied cards didn't say the right thing."

Wendy Cooling, children's book specialist³⁸

Several key pieces of research into children's learning and literacy have shown that the quality of the product on offer to children and the way in which it is marketed has a direct impact on its effectiveness. Similar views were expressed in the evaluation of the Sainsburys Bookstart materials. The Roehampton research⁶ also found that casual library users demanded that stock should be new and up to date, or they would not return to the library.

The *Start with the Child* research has shown an increasingly consumerist attitude from children as young as five. If libraries are to gain credibility with these young consumers then lessons must be learned about the quality of presentation and production. It is an area where libraries have traditionally not fared well but there is now a trend towards providing fewer high quality initiatives in partnership with others, rather than doing many lower quality, small scale promotions.

At the same time there has been a massive growth in reader development activity in school libraries – 32% of secondary school libraries have regular reading groups and over 25,000 children "shadow" the Carnegie and Greenaway Medals in school library reading groups.³⁹ But because of the disparate nature of school libraries, much of this activity remains unrecognised, and has failed to attract the large national sponsorship from companies such as Orange which similar work in public libraries has attracted. The profile of school libraries' reader development work needs boosting and reader development agencies need to investigate new ways of promoting and encouraging it. The Reading Agency, in partnership with Education Extra, has received funding from the Hamlyn Trust for a project called *Developing Reading Communities*, which will explore how children in deprived communities can access reading clubs in secondary schools and will build models for the way in which schools can link these children to public library resources for additional inspiration and encouragement. This is a welcome development, which could improve collaborative working.

5. Libraries and New Thinking About Learning

Study Support

Both formal homework or study support clubs and specific homework collections in public libraries have been found to contribute to improving children's formal educational achievement⁴⁰. Similar research into study support in schools has also found that pupils far exceed their predicted results and improve their performance at GCSE by as much as 3 grades⁴¹. Both sets of research support the view that study support provides additional benefits beyond the purely educational, improving attitudes to school, school attendance and social and personal development. The DfES research also highlights the benefits of study support for students from minority ethnic communities and to a lesser degree those eligible for free school meals.

Funding for homework clubs in libraries is patchy and, as a recent questionnaire circulated by CILIP⁴² has discovered, library authorities are using a range of funding opportunities to provide homework support. Thirty of the seventy-seven respondents to the survey had allocated core funding; the remaining authorities were using a variety of sources including SRB, Education Action Zone funding or funding from their LEA. Only seven authorities had benefited from New Opportunities Fund Out of School Activities funding, possibly because the criteria for this source of funding pitted libraries and other providers against each other. Libraries were benefiting most where partnerships were strongest: in Dundee the public libraries are partners in a 3 year Education Extra support programme for all KS1 children across the city enabling them to participate in reading clubs.

There is anecdotal evidence of a lack of support for homework clubs in libraries from some education professionals and a perception that schools and libraries are in competition in relation to study support. This is unfortunate as clearly there are some children who are not comfortable in a school environment but who will flourish in the less regulated atmosphere of a homework club in a library or other establishment. There must be room for both kinds of provision so that the differing needs of children can be met and they can encounter new settings for learning and new interpersonal dynamics with library staff.

6. Libraries in the Learning Community

Schools library services have traditionally provided valuable support, in terms of advice and guidance on the creation and management of school libraries, training for school librarians and teachers and loans of both curriculum based and leisure reading materials. Previously, many were centrally funded, often through a recharge to the LEA from the public library service and provided economies of scale. Delegation of budgets through LMS and, more recently, the regulations under Fair Funding, have changed that relationship radically.

Fair Funding, a regime which controls delegation of budgets to schools in England is seen by some as contributing to a decline in the provision of school library services. The proportion of LEA children served by schools library service in England and Wales dropped from 85% to 74% in 2000/2001 following its introduction. Consultation with schools library services has revealed that there is no uniform

experience of Fair Funding. Some services have grown as a result of the exercise as they have had more freedom to develop projects and services which can tap into funding streams – frequently these are urban, where zones of various types proliferate. Other services have been damaged by delegation and regard the continuation of the devolved and earmarked budgets for primary and special schools as a funding lifeline.

The picture varies across the rest of the UK. In Northern Ireland, schools library services are statutory. In Scotland the framework of schools library standards presupposes a close relationship between the school, the centrally funded schools library services and the LEA. In Wales, relatively few services have devolved or delegated budgets⁴³. The LISU survey⁴⁴ has found that school library services are developing in different ways across the country to the point now where no two school library services provide the same basket of services. Whilst this demonstrates that schools library services have adapted to survive and responded to local needs, it raises issues around advocacy: it is more difficult to promote the importance of schools library services at the most senior levels with policy makers if there is no clear model for what constitutes a school library service.

The proposed School Forums in each English LEA will have the power to re-centralise funding for schools library services. Each service will have to determine whether delegated or centralised funding is most supportive and argue their case accordingly. Services will need to be supported in this process with advocacy tools and national library bodies have a role in supporting them with materials and arguments.

Closer cross-sectoral working has been reinforced through the creation of Resource, the Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries. Submissions for this report from the Group for Education in Museums (GEM) mirror concerns voiced by school and public library professionals, particularly around the need for better understanding between teachers, librarians and museum officers and insufficient training particularly around the theory and practice of learning and teaching.

Libraries in the Further Education Sector

The Further Education sector has been through a period of exceptional turbulence and change over the past 10 years. It is also acknowledged as something of a Cinderella service, compared to the high profile and high levels of sustained funding dedicated to schools. As a result, libraries in FE institutions have found it difficult to respond to change and, in particular, they do not have the resources necessary to support the 14-16 year age group, which is a growing presence in their sector. Potential partnerships with public, school and school library services have not been developed adequately and some advances, such as reader development work or the developments in OFSTED inspections of school libraries, have not been mirrored in the FE situation. In addition, there is a need to address child safety issues, when under 16 year olds are increasingly present in adult-orientated FE environments.

For all these reasons, there is an urgent need for research, guidance and training to enable librarians in the FE sector to provide 14-19 year old learners with appropriate resources, a safe environment and the necessary information skills.

Given the growing linkages between youth workers and librarians, through schemes such as Youthbox, the Connexions services could be one avenue for working jointly with FE libraries on reader development. There could also be a support role for schools library services, which are already providing training and guidance to schools on the needs of 14-18 year olds. The need for cross-sectoral working on information literacy between public libraries, schools, FE and HE has already been mentioned. Pilot projects, with a focus on the pre-16 learner could also valuably involve Learning and Skills Councils and Connexions services too.

Relationships between formal educators and librarians

Recent research has shown that the relationship between librarians and teachers has a significant impact on the quality of the learning experience within schools⁴⁵. **The more integrated the approach from school library and teaching staff, the greater the mutual respect and understanding between both parties and the more collaborative the working, the better the learning experience is for children. The same is doubtless true for the wider relationship between LEA staff and public library staff.** This is an issue which was highlighted by Empowering the Learning Community and needs to be addressed urgently in the training of both teachers and library staff so that each has a greater understanding of and respect for each other's profession.

Conclusion

All of the research outlined in this chapter provides evidence of an exciting and unique role which is emerging for libraries in underpinning lifelong learning. However, the evidence also suggests that this role is not sufficiently valued by policy makers and strategists and that often criteria for funding streams and partnerships are created in ways which actually put barriers in the way of libraries' positive contribution.

The role of libraries in early years learning and development is undeniable and yet Bookstart is struggling to survive until 2004, when the promised funding will arrive. The capacity of libraries to support the aims of the National Strategy for Improving Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills should be recognised, especially if the proven route of family literacy and learning is used, by linking up libraries, basic skills services and early years providers.

The valuable role of schools library services in supporting provision of relevant materials, advice, training and support to information literacy has been undermined, perhaps unwittingly by variations in funding regimes. Although there is a growing acknowledgement that, as the curriculum in schools has narrowed its focus, school and public libraries have tried to offer broader informal learning opportunities to children and young people. More evidence of the contribution of school libraries to the wider learning agenda is needed.

A passion for reading unites the specialist librarians who work across all parts of the sector and this should lead them to work in closer partnership to the benefit of children and young people, in and out of school.

The lessons which FE and HE libraries have learned over the past few years,

especially about the provision of electronic or virtual library services and information literacy, need to be shared with the primary and secondary sector. The emphasis on learning and access in the Regional Agencies which are currently being set up by Resource could valuably put this issue on their agenda for urgent attention.

In summary, it is both wasteful and counter-productive for any government initiative which supports lifelong learning to ignore the potential contribution of libraries, particularly where children and young people are concerned. All the evidence demonstrates that they have a crucial role to play.

- ¹ www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk
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- ³ *Investing in children: the future of library services for children and young people.* Department of National Heritage. Library Information Series, No 22. HMSO. 1995
- ⁴ *Tomorrow's future: building a strategy for children and young people.* Children and Young People's Unit. www.cypu.gov.uk
- ⁵ Effective provision of pre-school education website: <http://kl.ioe.ac.uk/cdl/epe/index.htm>
- ⁶ *Young people's reading at the end of century: focus on pupils with special educational needs.* Susan Hancock, Jenny Kendrick, Kimberley Reynolds. London, Roehampton Institute (now University of Surrey Roehampton), 1999.
- ⁷ *Shaping the future: the experience of blind and partially sighted children and young people in the UK, RNIB.* 2000. Report 2. The educational experiences of 5-16 year old blind and partially sighted children and young people. Report 6. Summary Report. <http://www.rnib.org.uk/whatsnew/pressures/Oct 2000/missout.htm>
- ⁸ *Co-ordinating alternative format titles selection.* Final report to Share the Vision and the Library and Information Commission. Capital Planning Information Ltd. 2000
- ⁹ *A gift for life: Bookstart the first five years.* Barrie Wade and Maggie Moore. London, Book Trust, 1998
- ¹⁰ 'Everytime you see the bag you think, ooh - let's read a book'. *Evaluation of the Bookstart Programme.* Report by the National Centre for Research in Children's Literature, University of Surrey, Roehampton. London; Book Trust, 2001.
- ¹¹ www.surestart.gov.uk
- ¹² *Standards for School Library Resource Services in Scotland.* Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. 1999
- ¹³ *Report on Developments Worldwide on National Information Policy.* Adrienne Muir, Charles Oppenheim et al. Loughborough University. 2001
- ¹⁴ *Report on Developments Worldwide on National Information Policy.* 2001.
- ¹⁵ *Report on Developments Worldwide on National Information Policy.* 2001
- ¹⁶ 'Children's relevance criteria and information seeking on electronic resources'. S G Hirsch. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science.* Dec 1999
- ¹⁷ *Pilot Reading Survey 2000/01.* NCRCL, University of Surrey, Roehampton.
- ¹⁸ Information supplied by Price Waterhouse Coopers for 2001 DfES survey into innovations in CTCs. Unpublished.
- ¹⁹ *National Grid for Learning consultation: transforming the way we learn.* Great Britain, DfES. 2002.
- ²⁰ *The impact of the school library resource centre on learning.* Professor Dorothy Williams, Caroline Wavell. Robert Gordon University. 2001
- ²¹ Policy Advisory Group Report on a National Information Strategy. CILIP. 2002.
- ²² MORI Survey: a note of family learning. Cathie Hammond, Martin Gough. 2000
- ²³ 'Play with Mother is Key to Children's Success'. Judith Judd. The Independent. 03 July 2000
- ²⁴ *Skills for life: the national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills.* www.basicsskillsni.org.uk
- ²⁵ *The Learning Age.* www.lifelonglearning.co.uk
- ²⁶ *Children, access and learning: resource-based learning and the impacts of environment and learning cultures.* Sarah McNichol, Tilusha Ghelani, Clare Nankivell, Michael Shoolbred. UCE. 2001
- ²⁷ *Children, access and learning: resource-based learning and the impacts of environment and learning cultures.* London; Resource, 2001.
- ²⁸ *Evaluation of the Bookstart Programme,* 2001.
- ²⁹ Effective provision of Pre-School Education website: <http://kl.ioe.ac.uk/cdl/epe/index.htm>
- ³⁰ Available to view at www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/literacy Module 10 Literacy Across the Curriculum. DfES. 2001
- ³¹ Module 10 literacy across the curriculum. DfES. 2001
- ³² *Key Stage 3 National Strategy: managing the second year.* DfES. 2002
- ³³ *Children, access and learning: resource-based learning and the impacts of environment and learning cultures.* 2001.
- ³⁴ *Focus on the child: libraries, literacy and learning.* Judith Elkin and Ray Lonsdale. London; Library Association, 1999.
- ³⁵ *Start with the child.* 2002.
- ³⁶ *Pilot reading survey 2000/1.*
- ³⁷ *Start with the child.* 2002.
- ³⁸ 'In the summertime'. Jonathan Douglas. The Bookseller. 10 May 2002
- ³⁹ *The Library Association survey of secondary school libraries.* Sheffield Hallam University, for the Library Association. 1999.
- ⁴⁰ *Value and impact of homework help clubs in public libraries.* Briony Traine, Clare Nankivell, Professor Judith Elkin, Karin Richter. London, Library & Information Commission, 2000.
- ⁴¹ *Impact of Study Support: a study into the effects of participation in out-of-school-hours learning on the academic attainment, attitudes and attendance of secondary school students.* John MacBeath et al. DfES Research Brief No 273. London, DfES, 2001.
- ⁴² Study support in libraries: the results of a Library Association questionnaire.
- ⁴³ *Impact of Study Support.* 2001.
- ⁴⁴ *A survey of library services to schools and children in the UK 2000-2001.* 2001.
- ⁴⁵ *The impact of the school library resource centre on learning: a report on research conducted for Resource: The Council for Museums.* Dorothy Williams and Caroline Wavell. London; Library & Information Commission, 2001.
- ⁴⁶ *Empowering the Learning Community: report of the Education and Libraries Task Group to the Secretaries of State for Culture, Media and Sport and for Education and Employment.* Library & Information Commission. 2000.

“The satisfaction of children's and young people's needs as individuals should be recognised and promoted as a core element of the public library service, central to its role in the promotion of literacy and its role in relation to educational institutions (...).”

Recommendation 2 Investing in Children¹

How far are libraries in 2002 successful in meeting children and young people's needs? To what extent is satisfying those needs now a core part of the library service? In the previous sections of this report children's needs were identified and the role of libraries in terms of supporting reading, literacy and learning described. This section sets out to answer these questions by looking at the available evidence in order to build up a picture of the extent to which young people's needs are met and the potential of libraries realised. A good library service will respond with:

- Appropriate environments and services
- Services that are relevant and responsive
- Appropriate help for children and young people and for those who support them
- Support from the community at large to use and benefit from services.

Following an overview of how data is collected, this chapter will make use of the evidence outlined above to look at the extent to which libraries currently respond to these needs. It has to be acknowledged that this report is based on reported activity and that a great deal of good work goes unreported and unshared.

In 1995, *Investing in Children*² highlighted the necessity for better information about young people's satisfaction with library services, for more measurement and evaluation of services and for quality standards. Since then these have all become the norm for public services and the aspiration to put people at the centre of service planning is widely shared. School libraries, public libraries and School Library Services have all become more adept at collecting and using management information to improve their services. In England, Best Value, Public Library Standards³ and Annual Library Plans as well as Ofsted inspections of LEAs and individual schools have been the vehicles for pushing this forward.

I. Data Collection

One of the most direct and concrete results of *Investing in Children* has been the development of Children's PLUS⁴ (Public Library User Survey). Children's PLUS gives a snapshot of children's use of, and satisfaction with their library service. From the beginning, the aim was to survey children both in the library and in community venues so that both library users and non-users would be reached. The “In” library survey is well established with 53 library authorities having used it in 1999/2000 and 2000/1. As a result there is now a national picture of the ways in which children and young people use library services and their satisfaction with them. In addition, members of Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians (ASCEL), Loughborough University' Library and Information Statistics Unit (LISU) and The Institute of Public Finance (IPF) are now working on a survey of School Library Services (SLSs) that it is hoped can demonstrate both satisfaction with SLS's and the impact on schools.

The other major source of annual data about library services to children and young people is the *Annual Survey of Services to Children and School Library Services* carried out by LISU⁵. This data presents an annual snapshot and year on year trends of the inputs, outputs and services offered. It is now used as part of the benchmarking exercise for SLS being developed by ASCEL.

The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) carries out a bi-annual survey of secondary schools⁶ (in Wales this is carried out in all schools) and has carried out several surveys designed to capture a snapshot of the state of play in specific areas, for instance, under fives⁷, homework support⁸. Equally data is also available from national initiatives, for instance, the summer reading challenge. Authorities will use at least some of the following information to build up a picture of how well they are responding to children's needs – information about members, book borrowing and numbers of visitors with comments forms, evaluation sheets for events and activities, competitions and focus groups. There is now a considerable amount of information available about the ways in which libraries touch children's lives but much of it is not easily available or shared widely with the result that children and their carers and other practitioners are not fully aware of just how much libraries have to offer.

Increasingly library services want and need to be able to show the impact of their services, that they not only have a place in people's lives but that they also make a difference. ASCEL has been working with a consultant to provide training and develop tools so that practitioners can measure the impact of any of their services. This is being built on in *Their Reading Futures*⁹, where the focus is on the contribution of libraries and reading. Resource are currently working with the University of Leicester to evaluate the way museums, archives and libraries impact on learning as part of the *Inspiring Learning framework*¹⁰.

However, it is not enough to collect the data. It needs to be used to evaluate success and to learn what works. **Annual Library Plans, Best Value Reviews, Ofsted reports are all vehicles for making a qualitative assessment of a service but they do not focus on specifics like public library services to children or School Library Services. Good practice in services to children and young people is included in the reports but is not easy to retrieve.** Individual initiatives are often written up in magazines like *Youth Libraries Review* or *The School Librarian* or professional themed reports e.g. *All our children*¹¹, an excellent guide to social inclusion initiatives produced by the Youth Libraries Group. Resource has sponsored a number of research reports. There are also occasionally specific evaluations, for instance the long term evaluation of Bookstart, but these require time and resources to track down and many opportunities to share the lessons learned in one place to help other authorities with their planning are lost.

Public Library Standards and Ofsted inspection criteria set out to measure whole services, LEAs or schools against agreed standards and so the needs of children and young people in the library context form only a small part of the whole. Independently of these bigger picture standards, a number of more specific quality frameworks, standards and guidelines have been, or are in the process, of being developed, for instance *Taking a Closer Look at the School Library Resource Centre*¹² in Scotland, *The Study Support Guidelines*¹³, the audit framework for *Their Reading Futures*,

*Primary School Guidelines*¹⁴. *Inspiring Learning for All*; the framework currently being developed by Resource is a potential vehicle for the creation of a specific document, which focuses on the needs of children and young people using the same principles and areas of development.

Involving young people in developing standards is a real challenge but essential if their needs are to be met.

2. Appropriate environments and services

All libraries should aspire to provide safe and welcoming environments for their various visitors. The Centre for the Child in Birmingham, is a good example of a welcoming and child friendly place. It is fortunate to be a dedicated space for children but many of the principles that lie behind it can be transferred to other locations.

Attractive but sturdy furniture, beanbags, low seating for parents, bright colours are fairly widely adopted when planning areas for the under fives. **The need to get buggies into the picture book area tends to ensure that there is a reasonable amount of space for early years provision even in fairly small libraries. However, there is often much less space for older children and young people. Many libraries only provide a limited amount of study space and little or no casual seating, despite the repeated evidence that young people in particular want a space that they can call their own.** The needs of children with special needs are sometimes recognised through the provision of specific services, for example giant books, tactile books, Clearvision books. In Lancashire, libraries are using funding from DCMS Wolfson to create four Smile Centres designed to meet the needs of children with disabilities. However, this type of provision is very patchy.

Some authorities have taken steps to involve young people in designing their environment. Westminster Libraries were able to use SRB funding to work with a teenage focus group who made decisions about the book stock, design and promotion of the Teenage Section in Paddington Library – the Paddington Zone. This saw a 91% increase in issues in the first month and had a very positive impact on young people with favourable feedback from teachers and library staff who saw benefit to the whole library. Other libraries in Westminster are keen to explore the possibilities for repeating this elsewhere. Examples like this are still the exception rather than the rule and usually dependant on external funding.

Libraries should be safe places where children feel comfortable and confident. *A Safe Place for Children*¹⁶, CILIP's guidelines to promote child safety in libraries, provide excellent guidance on all aspects of safety. Many Local Authorities have also worked with Social Services staff to identify child safety issues and address them themselves with guidelines or training for staff or information for parents.

Creating a welcoming atmosphere depends very much on staff attitudes that are influenced by policies, training and development and the ethos of the authority. Staffing issues are picked up later in this section. The tensions between the needs of different users – someone studying wants a quieter environment than a family with young children – can affect how welcoming the library feels to children and their families. Despite reassurance, parents themselves still feel under pressure,

"...if I take my two year old in there she is not quiet and I think, "Get her out of here quick or I will have everybody moaning." So I would not take her in there because it is hard to keep her quiet."

Lapsed user Shire England – Building Better Library Services¹⁷.

The DfES makes specific recommendations in its *Area Guidelines for Schools*¹⁸ for the size of schools' learning resource centres. The school library should be able to cater for 10% of the total number on the roll engaged with library activities at any one time. The 1999 survey of secondary school libraries discovered libraries could, on average, accommodate 11% of the school. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the situation is worse in many primary schools, where libraries are frequently distributed as classroom collections - not allowing pupils to access the entire collection.

Information Technology

For children and young people technology is an essential and fundamental part of their lives.

"We rely on the computers and the Internet to do our homework." Omar, aged 12¹⁹

By December 2002, all libraries will have access to the Internet and PCs as a result of the People's Network. What this means to children and young people will vary but in larger libraries with a number of PCs, there will usually be some that are available specifically for children. In smaller libraries staff will need to manage access so that no one group of users is excluded.

Library services have created a variety of resources to exploit technology creatively:

- Stories from the Web brought together 12 libraries to create a website that encourages both reading and writing. It has combined the virtual with "real" activities like author visits to the clubs in libraries - but as a virtual activity it reaches round the world.

"This website is the funkiest, and I mean FUNKIEST website in the galaxy. Period!"
Juliet, 11, from Arizona.²⁰

- A few authorities have created websites for children's and young people's reviews – for instance, www.make-a-difference.org.uk based on a project in Peterborough aimed at using the development of a website to promote reading.
- Others have put staff produced reading lists on the library website, for instance Essex or Hampshire.

There is huge potential to reach out to children wherever they are but to do so requires an investment of staff time and skills and a willingness to share both the results and the work between authorities.

Some authorities have used the practical elements of New Opportunities Fund (NOF) training either for the expected outcomes, or as part of the advanced training

to create resources that can support staff in helping children and young people or that are directed at the young people themselves. For instance, Northamptonshire Libraries established a gateway of recommended internet sites available in all their libraries. These included sites for children, young people and for parents and carers. In Gateshead the "Off Beat" project was aimed at giving young people at risk of re-offending projects to do. Library staff were involved in demonstrating ICT skills and were able to link this with their NOF Educator training.²¹

Displays and Exhibitions

Displays, exhibitions and activities are important in creating the buzz around a library, making it exciting and welcoming and attracting new users. But they are often time consuming to organise, they must be of the highest quality and have a clear purpose.

Displays and exhibitions can be powerful tools for attracting new members to the library and are widely used. When children's work from school or an out of school activity is displayed, there is plenty of evidence that at least some of the children involved will bring family and friends to the library. **For major promotional events most libraries will put on displays. However, not every library has the space, staff confidence or expertise to do this effectively. National activities like the summer reading challenge have responded by producing posters and other materials that can be used to produce professional and colourful displays.**

Activities

According to the LISU statistics for 1999-2000, 80% of authorities provide activities for under fives in at least one of their libraries on a regular basis.²² Activities for most other age groups tend to happen on a less regular basis and not necessarily in all libraries in a Local Authority. However, throughout the year in one authority, there may be events to celebrate promotions like World Book Day or Family Learning Weekend, events tied to local celebrations, reading groups and perhaps author or illustrator visits in addition to early years activities. In 2000-1 approximately 2% of the expenditure on services to children went on activities.²³

85% of library authorities take part in the annual national reading challenge which includes about 4000 libraries and reaches around 500,000 4-11 year olds, attracting 20,000 new members annually. Research by the University of Surrey has shown that the challenge makes a difference to children's reading confidence, skill, enjoyment and motivation – 8 out of 10 children consider themselves better readers as a result of it.²⁴

"Because before I started the reading challenge I could not read hard words but now I can read hard words as well as spell." Child

"The scheme is very motivating for the children and encourages the less confident readers to participate." Headteacher

3. Services that are relevant and responsive

One of the most fundamental requirements is for libraries to be open when children and young people need them and can access them. At the moment, many authorities struggle to open libraries outside office hours or for a significant amount of time at the weekend. School libraries which are staffed by a 'solo' librarian face particular challenges in responding to the demands of young people for a wide range of opening times. For public libraries working towards the Public Library Standards that focus on distance from a library and opening hours will benefit children as much as any other users.

Declining issues and visitors present one view of children's satisfaction with library services. LISU reported that "all sectors except English counties reported a decline in issues" during 2000-1.²⁵ However, there are other reports that show that although children borrow fewer books and visit libraries less regularly, children and their carers still look to libraries for their reading. In the pilot reading survey conducted by NCRCL in 2001, they found,

*"Libraries seem to be getting it right, in encouraging young people, particularly Key Stage 1 children to borrow books. 70% of Key Stage 1 children report that they 'often' borrow books from the local library."*²⁶

The research for *Building Better Library Services* found that parents with children are amongst the most frequent users. 49% used the library at least once a week, 76% at least once a year²⁷ and they gave their reason for doing this as the wide range of books available.

Stock Management

The library's stock needs to reflect the needs of its users, to offer children and young people the chance to try a wide range of reading experiences, to have sufficient choice to experiment and become discriminating. The opportunity to experience imaginative reading is important but so is the opportunity to read for information or to develop visual and ICT reading skills.

The LISU surveys seem to suggest that good access to books varies widely.²⁸ In public libraries, the overall trend is for books to be replaced at a slightly faster rate in 2000-1 than in the previous year. This means that children will have access to books in better condition and more chance to borrow new titles as well as old favourites. In the *PLUS National Report for 1999/2000*, 99.6% of children rated the books as good or OK with 85.1% of them rating the books as good. This compares with much lower figures for other materials. The schools library service support for schools is also important as many children only get books through school. The same survey found that the numbers of children reached by schools library services was declining although it also found:

"SLs hold 3.6 items per pupil served of which 97% are books. There were 14 million items on loan to schools at 31 March 2001."

Despite the evidence that library services need to respond to young people's popular culture, there are a number of barriers for librarians to overcome before they can do this. **Book buying procedures and other aspects of internal management systems can make it difficult to acquire materials sufficiently quickly for the books to be there when they're wanted.** Some libraries have responded by introducing advance ordering for children's books for the most popular authors so that the books are on the shelves on the day of publication – essential for Harry Potters. Other crazes cause more debate amongst librarians – the books may be flimsy, it isn't always easy to anticipate which of the many new TV tie ins will genuinely take off and finally do these represent proper use of public funds. **In a more demanding culture where children and young people expect to have a say, this is a challenge to libraries for the future.**

Magazines can be another source of contention. They are clearly popular with young people and more and more libraries stock them but the content of some of the teen girl magazines can seem very adult and librarians worry about adverse adult comments. However, when young people are surveyed for their choice of magazines these are usually highly recommended by them and well read.

Some libraries have explored other aspects of stock to try to provide materials which are relevant to young people's interests and self image. A few libraries now stock computer games for loan. Where these are kept up to date with regular acquisitions and well promoted they can work well. Equally partnerships between Games Workshop and public libraries have been successful in attracting groups of boys into the library for games sessions.

A good library experience will include opportunities for children to take responsibility and exercise freedom of choice. In schools, pupil librarian schemes are successful in involving young people very directly in the running of their school library. Library membership itself is a powerful form of early responsibility and independence that libraries often under estimate. Children have the library ticket in their own name and can borrow and choose books for themselves.

One of the unique aspects of library use is the freedom of choice it offers children and young people. They can experiment with their reading because it costs nothing to borrow a book. Libraries use displays, book lists and reading groups as ways of helping them discuss their reading choices and enjoy recommendations from their peers. 49% of public library authorities run reading group programmes²⁹. They may run for a couple of terms or be permanent depending on the group and library resources. However, they all give children the opportunity to talk about books and to recommend them to each other.

Study Support

Children and young people want to use libraries to support their learning needs. They want to find materials, services and space to meet these needs.

Many school libraries have responded imaginatively to the needs of young people for out of hours learning support, with holiday revision time opening and breakfast clubs. A survey in 1999 found that 52% offered out of hours activities³⁰. The school

librarian is uniquely positioned within the school community to offer study support. There is no need to step outside of a classroom persona to motivate self-directed learning. This position has enabled some school librarians to take on the role of the school's study support co-ordinator.

The 1999/2000 Children's PLUS showed that 13% of those surveyed had come to the library to do their homework.³¹ All libraries will have experienced an influx of children or young people, all desperately seeking the same piece of information for school. The same survey showed that children were less satisfied by the ways libraries supported their homework than they were about the books in general. Libraries have responded by creating collections of books chosen to respond to popular topics and often not for loan. These ease the pressure on stock and staff and can be popular with children because they find what they want quickly. Access to the internet means that even the smallest library can help with obscure homework topics but staff need to be aware of relevant homework sites that contain accurate information and are at the right level. Annual Library Plan guidance, now ensures that all authorities have to state their service philosophy and the key points of their policies in relation to homework and study support.³² As a result, most libraries offer at least a basic level of support for homework and study.

A number of libraries have responded by providing specific staffing for study support. **Study support has tended to be predominantly in urban areas. Transport difficulties, smaller numbers and less external funding has made this more difficult to provide in rural areas.** Some library services have been actively involved in authority wide steering groups that include the wide range of partners involved in delivering study support, for instance Essex Libraries were the lead partner in developing the authority's Out of School Hours Learning Strategy and winning £1.3million from the New Opportunities Fund for 12 homework centres. Others have worked with Single Regeneration Budget, Standards Fund and a wide range of other funding opportunities. **However, these tend to be short term solutions to the funding needs and in the longer term local authorities have had to look at ways of mainstreaming this provision if they are to continue what are usually very well used services.**

Involvement in Service Delivery

It is clear from the research cited in Chapter One that young people prize the opportunity to participate and be involved in the planning and delivery of services, to provide feedback and have their ideas listened to and acted upon. Library services themselves recognise that this will improve their service. As a result of the Public Library Standards (PLSs), library authorities now have to survey children and young people. Whilst the research on children's needs seems to indicate that the current PLSs do not reflect children's or young people's priorities, it is nonetheless a major step forward in ensuring that children's and young people's needs are included in the mainstream service. In response to this, the LISU Survey for 2000/1 showed how more authorities are likely to survey their children and young people.

"28% of responding authorities had carried out a Children's PLUS" by March 2001 but "61% had not surveyed children at all." However, "53% planned to carry out PLUS survey in 2001-2".³³

Surveys give a snapshot of children's satisfaction with services at the time of the survey. There are a number of good examples of authorities seeking feedback to gain a deeper understanding of their views. These need only involve a relatively small number but if shared within the authority, or more widely can make a much bigger impact on the responsiveness of library services.

"Young people at our branch library have, with the support of library staff, formed a focus group. This meets regularly and advises the Library Service on the development of Study Support and some areas of policy and stock. This has empowered the young people who are now deciding for themselves a way forward. Some of the young people are acting as mentors on a volunteer basis for younger members of the study support group."

Durham Arts, Libraries and Museums Service.³⁴

4. **Appropriate help for Children and Young People and for those who support them**

Staff who have the skills and confidence to assist and support children and young people in making the best use of the service are crucial. At present, what this means in terms of person specifications and job descriptions varies from authority to authority. This is especially the case in terms of the role/existence of specialists and professional librarians. Twenty library authorities reported having no specialist children's librarians in the LISU survey of 2000-1 although 47% of expenditure on children and young people was on staff with a brief to work with children.³⁵ On the other hand, the last two years have seen a significant growth in the number of specialist posts for early years. In April 2001 31 of the 88 library authorities replying to LA survey had a recognisable early years specialist.³⁶ These are not necessarily professional librarians.

The role of front line staff is vital. They are the staff that children are most likely to meet on a library visit. Their response makes a real difference to library use.

Generally children's comments and reaction in PLUS shows that they find the staff to be good or OK – 98.8% did so in the PLUS survey for 1999/2000 – and 85.9% thought they were good. In terms of someone to help with their homework they were less favourable – 93.2% rated this as good or OK but only 60.5% gave this a "good" rating.³⁷ Time, skills and resources affect the confidence with which staff respond to children.

Time has always been an issue simply because the hours in which children can use the library are limited – mostly they arrive together after school. Some of the early homework initiatives arose out of a desire to address that by either providing more staff or making library use easier for children.

Staff Training

Training and development are cornerstones in equipping existing staff with skills and confidence. Investors in People creates a climate where training and development is valued and understood. **The importance of customer care and staff training has also been recognised by many authorities. However, children and young people**

have specific needs and how far library staff are trained to respond to these will depend on the priority given to work with children and young people locally.

Some authorities run specific courses focussing on the needs of children and young people and targeted at front line staff. In Birmingham, for instance, there has been a regular programme of training in study support since 1999.³⁸ External funding and special projects also provide the resources to deliver training. All of the current DCMS/Wolfson funded projects include staff training recognising that, if the aims of the different projects are to be sustained, staff with the right skills are crucial.³⁶

In *Their Reading Futures*, the training programme is enhanced by identifying the core skills that all staff need to encourage children's reading, creating a website to support staff in acquiring these skills and developing a self assessment framework to help staff improve their service. Professional groups like the Youth Libraries Group also provide an alternative way of accessing more specific training.

All public and school library staff are currently going through a national programme to give them a basic set of ICT skills. This has not been extended to include FE library staff. This will benefit children as well as other library users as library staff become more confident in using the ICT in their libraries. Children's needs are not ignored – the expected outcomes of the training include recognition of children's needs. **In the advanced training, it is important that authorities think carefully about the training for different roles and involve staff working with children as well as information specialists.**

Any discussion of staffing in relation to children has to be seen in a wider context of public services. *Recruit, Retain and Lead*³⁹ outlined the current challenges facing libraries in both attracting new staff, retaining existing staff and in growing library leaders for the future. The issues outlined in this report are those facing the whole of public service and so affect many library partners as well as library services themselves. For a number of authorities these issues are compounded by the difficulties of recruiting staff from local communities.

Surveys by both CILIP and LISU indicate the steady rise in full-time chartered school librarian posts. Scotland has far higher levels of profession school librarians than the rest of the UK. In 1999 71% of Scottish secondary schools had a chartered librarian, compared to 10% in Wales and Northern Ireland and 25% in England⁴⁰. The government's commitment to increasing the number of non-teaching staff in schools suggests that this trend will continue and probably increase. It is essential that the skills needs of these new school librarians are addressed, if they are to fulfil their potential in supporting learning and teaching. The NOF ICT training for school librarians has set a welcome precedent for focusing on their CPD. There is a need for ongoing investment. Appropriate help can only be delivered with appropriate skills.

Social Inclusion

Achieving socially inclusive services is a challenge for the traditional library service and requires changes in the nature of mainstream provision and re-targeting of resources. At the most fundamental level this requires authorities to look again at

their charging and joining procedures as for many excluded groups perceptions about these present an insuperable barrier. According to LISU 2000-1, 78% of authorities make no charge to children for requests and 45% charge for overdue items.⁴¹ In 2000, ASCEL conducted a survey of members and found that 55% of authorities replying had reviewed their charging policy.⁴² Joining procedures are also an immediate barrier. Projects working with young people in care experience this particularly as there are often no adults who want to take long term responsibility for a young person's library membership. Those authorities in the West Midlands involved in the DCMS/Wolfson funded *Caring with Books*⁴³ project are working together to look at different models that can be adapted to local circumstances. The report on Annual Library plans for 2001⁴⁴ looked at the extent to which services to children were covered under social inclusion. 87 were identified as doing this well with a further 37 doing it satisfactorily. However, about 20 did not cover it at all and 4 were poor.

Libraries need to look at their stock, the environment, their staff and their regular activities if they are to be sure that their approach is both encouraging social cohesion and not causing certain groups to be excluded. Many libraries have recognised the need to stock books that reflect different cultures and that are in different scripts. These books have a role to play in creating a nationally cohesive society whatever the actual make-up of the local population. Kent Library Service's work with asylum seekers and refugee children has arisen out of local need but will be of relevance to the whole country in the longer term.⁴⁵ **Getting the right staff and, in particular, staff that reflect the community served by the local library is difficult and an area of concern for many authorities. Staff also need to be aware of and sensitive to different needs, for instance of young people with learning disabilities.** There are some organisations like Share the Vision tackling the needs of specific groups but there are a number of groups that are not included in current staff development or national activities.

Much of the work promoting social inclusion tends to be project based, reaches a small number of people and is intensive in the resources required. As a result, a great deal of successful and intensive work is not built on long term. This is especially true where it is clear that fundamental changes in service delivery may be required if a particular group is to be served. It will be one of the longer term issues facing Surestart projects. **Library authorities should ensure that they use the evaluation and reporting process of projects to disseminate as widely as possible the value of the work they are undertaking. The experience of Bookstart has shown that where a scheme is evaluated and reported on widely and in terms that relate to broad objectives, then commitment from partners and stakeholders will follow.**

In 2000, ASCEL found that 46% of authorities had developed social inclusion projects. These were targeted at a wide range of different groups. One trend is for successful projects in one authority to lead to other similar projects in other authorities. The availability of funds can help in this but isn't essential as is demonstrated by the range of projects targeting young people in public care that are now funded from a number of funding streams. Government priorities naturally have a significant impact, "Quality Protects" and work on corporate parenting has ensured that this group is a priority for many. Equally, access to reports and opportunities to learn from other colleagues, for example *Right to Read*⁴⁶, will also have encouraged a number of

libraries to focus on this group.

The fact that so much activity is based on project funding does create problems of integrating and sustaining the benefits within the mainstream library service. Often project workers are brought in to lead projects with the result that the project operates outside the mainstream, getting round barriers to use by simply ignoring them rather than challenging and changing the mainstream service. Equally there is the risk that the project workers become highly skilled at working with socially excluded groups but those skills are not developed within the permanent workforce. This affects the long term effectiveness of social inclusion work and the capacity of the authority to build on projects.

5. Support from the community at large to use and benefit from services.

Reaching all children, young people and their carers so that they are aware of what the library has to offer them requires marketing skills that are not always available to library staff.

Good quality publicity materials and the sense of belonging to a special group are important. With some groups, however, personal contact and local links may be more effective. Wolverhampton Libraries used this approach when establishing their Asian family reading groups, piloted during the Year of Reading.

“Great emphasis was put on a welcoming atmosphere at each venue with plenty of time for informal contact and enjoyment of refreshments.”

Marion Cockin, Children's and Young people's Services Manager,
Wolverhampton Libraries⁴⁷.

Partnership Working

By working with influential partners, library services can make contact with hard to reach groups and gain credibility for their services. Sure Start or Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCPs) involve both School Library Services and public library services working with playworkers, health staff, teachers, Basic Skills and ESOL tutors as well as many other local groups. **Partnerships when they are strong and long lasting can have benefits that extend beyond short term initiatives. For instance, a number of authorities have found their EYDCP keen to find ways of supporting Bookstart when local funding was needed. Individuals in partner organisations will become effective advocates of the library service if they see that the library service really does have something to offer the children and families they work with.** Health Visitors have acted as effective advocates on behalf of library services as part of their work in delivering Bookstart.

Partnerships contribute to the development of holistic and joined up local services that benefit the young people. One innovative example of this is Melton library's partnership with Leicestershire County Council's Public Transport Group. The library has tackled the transport issue for rural children who visit the library after school but live in outlying villages by providing a free voucher for travel on the service bus instead of school bus. The scheme is funded by the New Opportunities Fund.⁴⁸ Schemes like this are rare, however.

Libraries are involved in many different partnerships across the age ranges. They are most successful in partnerships that are targeted at groups where libraries already have a track record of successful intervention. 83 out of the 88 authorities responding to the Library Association survey in 2001 were able to say that Bookstart had been the way into new partnerships.⁴⁹ Hence, the fairly widespread involvement in early years partnership working through EYDCPs and Sure Start. Libraries also seek out individual or short term partners to deliver specific goals as can be seen in the range of partnerships made to further social inclusion. These include Prisons, Youth Services, Social Services as well as voluntary organisations like the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

In many ways the extent to which a school library can effectively meet the needs of learners and educators within the school is determined by the levels of collaboration with the rest of the school community. Collaboration can be limited by numerous factors. However as schools are increasingly seen within the context of the wider education community, in order to deliver the new 14-19 learning agenda and develop the concept of the “extended school”, the need for the school library to be at the hub of a network of learning partnerships is more important than ever before. The school librarian now needs to be forging partnerships with learning and teaching programmes outside of the school and working collaboratively with learning resource managers in FE and HE as well as in other sectors.

Libraries do also work with commercial partners although often the relationship is not a partnership, rather sponsorship of an activity, for instance a company providing funding for summer holiday activities. Few libraries have explored commercial partnerships in the way in which, for instance Barking and Dagenham have worked with Ford to establish a library at the Ford factory. More obvious partners are booksellers and publishers. Recent research by the University of Central England found that collaborative working between libraries, publishers, booksellers and library suppliers.

“is patchy and in the main related to one off projects, where pump priming funding was also given, in many cases from the Arts Council.....but much of the longer-standing work was with young people.”⁵⁰

The research also identified one of the real challenges to successful partnership between the public and private sectors as the public sector's need to establish an activity as a long term service and the private sector's need to keep developing new ways to reach their market. However, Chesterfield Book Club, run jointly by Peak Books and Derbyshire Libraries and aimed at 8-11 year olds demonstrates the benefits of collaboration.

“There is a greater understanding of how each partner works and the contribution each can make. Library staff have benefited from the commercial knowledge and experience of marketing contributed by Peak Books. Peak Books have appreciated the library staff's experience of running author events and other activities.”

Ann Ainsworth and Kath Spriggs⁵¹

Investing in Children highlighted the central need for all library services to children to develop an integrated strategy for public library services, SLSs and school libraries. Some authorities for instance Essex, worked to do this and published strategies that could apply to all libraries in the authority. However, the different pressures on the various providers mentioned in Chapter Two have made it difficult to achieve an integrated strategy in many authorities. Links between schools and their local public library continue although there is a lack of published evidence to show trends. Dual use libraries are still being built or established. Best Value and the need to provide libraries in a bigger range of locations appear to be revitalising this approach. In Staffordshire, there is now a joint use library for the public, for an FE college and for Staffordshire University. **However, the current anecdotal evidence from practitioners working in school libraries, public library services and School Library Services indicates that integrated working has become more difficult and that this is unlikely to change.**

6. Conclusion

There are real examples of good practice where libraries respond to children's and young people's needs in innovative ways but this is patchy across the country, across age groups and even within authorities. Most authorities have reasonably strong mainstream provision for early years and Key Stage One and are involved in initiatives to reach some socially excluded groups. But as children become young people there is less evidence of library activity targeted at meeting their needs. **In particular, libraries find it more difficult to respond with credibility to popular culture but ignoring it runs the risk of alienating young people. It is also clear that where a child lives affects the style of library service they have access to.** This is in part the result of differing local policies on issues like fines for children, or the priority given to children within the overall library service. It also results from uneven government funding. For most authorities, external funding is now essential for developing new services to meet changing needs. In school libraries this is made harder by the requirement not only to support national and independent learning, but also formal learning and the delivery of the curriculum. **If services nationally are to meet young people's needs effectively and children throughout the country are to experience an exciting library service that meets their needs, then it is essential that library services work regionally and nationally towards common quality frameworks so that the quality of experience is consistently high even if the services delivered reflect local needs.**

- ¹ *Investing in children: the future of library services to children*. Library and Information Services Council (England), Working Party on Library Services for Children and Young People. London; HMSO, 1995
- ² *Investing in children: the future of library services to children*. 1995.
- ³ *Comprehensive, Efficient and Modern Public Libraries – Standards and Assessment*. London, DCMS, 2001.
- ⁴ Children's PLUS – information available from IPF – www.ipf.co.uk/PLUS/
- ⁵ *A survey of library services to schools and children in the UK*, LISU, annual.
- ⁶ *A survey of UK Secondary School libraries*, The Library Association, 1999
- ⁷ *Early years survey*, The Library Association, 2001
- ⁸ *Homework Initiatives*, The Library Association, 1998
- ⁹ For more information see www.resource.org/action/dcmswolf/
- ¹⁰ *Inspiring learning: a framework for access and learning in Museums, Archives and Libraries*. London; Resource, 2001. See www.resource.org.uk for latest draft.
- ¹¹ *All our children: social inclusion and children's libraries*. Youth Libraries Group of the Library Association, 2001.
- ¹² *Taking a closer look at the school library resource centre: self-evaluation using performance indicators*, Scottish CCC 1999.
- ¹³ *The code of practice for public libraries: study support*, The Quality in Education Centre, University of Strathclyde, 2002.
- ¹⁴ *The Primary School Library Guidelines*, The Library Association, 2000
- ¹⁵ *All our children: social inclusion and children's libraries*. 2001
- ¹⁶ *A safe place for children*, CILIP. 2002.
- ¹⁷ *Building Better Library Services*. Audit Commission, 2002.
- ¹⁸ *Area guidelines for schools*. Great Britain. Architects and Building Branch. London; HMSO, 1996
- ¹⁹ *Neighbourhood renewal and museums, libraries and archives*, Sandra Parker; Ken Waterston, Gerald Michaluk, Louise Richard. London; Resource, 2002.
- ²⁰ *Stories from the web* - <http://www.storiesfromtheweb.org/>
- ²¹ *People's network site* - <http://www.peoplesnetwork.gov.uk/>
- ²² *A survey of library services to schools and children in the UK*.
- ²³ *A survey of library services to schools and children in the UK*
- ²⁴ *Reading Relay Report*, Fiona M. Collins, Judith Graham, University of Surrey, Roehampton, unpublished
- ²⁵ *A survey of library services to schools and children in the UK*, LISU, annual
- ²⁶ *Pilot reading survey*, NCRCL, University of Surrey, Roehampton 2001
- ²⁷ *Building better library services*. 2002.
- ²⁸ *A survey of library services to schools and children in the UK*, LISU, annual
- ²⁹ *Survey of secondary school libraries*. The Library Association. 1999.
- ³⁰ *A Survey of library services to schools and children in the UK*, LISU, annual
- ³¹ *Children's PLUS National Report 1999-2000*, information available from IPF.
- ³² *Annual Library Plans: Guidance 2002* <http://www.libplans.ws/>
- ³³ *Children's PLUS National Report 1999-2000*, information available from IPF.
- ³⁴ *The code of practice for public libraries: study support*, The Quality in Education Centre, University of Strathclyde, 2002
- ³⁵ *A survey of library services to schools and children in the UK*, LISU, annual
- ³⁶ *Early Years Survey, Library Association, 2001*. Available at <http://www.la-hq.org.uk>
- ³⁷ *The code of practice for public libraries: study support*, The Quality in education Centre, University of Strathclyde, 2002
- ³⁸ *DCMS Wolfson projects* <http://www.resource.gov.uk/action/dcmswolf/>
- ³⁹ *Recruit, retain and lead: the public library workforce study*, Professor Bob Usherwood. London; Resource, 2000.
- ⁴⁰ *Survey of Secondary School Libraries*, The Library Association, 1999
- ⁴¹ *A survey of library services to schools and children in the UK*, LISU, annual
- ⁴² *All our children: Social Inclusion and Children's Libraries*, 2001
- ⁴³ *DCMS Wolfson projects* <http://www.resource.gov.uk/action/dcmswolf/>
- ⁴⁴ *Annual Library Plans: Report 2001 Plans* <http://www.libplans.ws/>
- ⁴⁵ *All our children: Social Inclusion and Children's Libraries*, YLG, 2001
- ⁴⁶ *Right to read. Promoting the benefits of reading to children and young people in public care*. 2001.
- ⁴⁷ *Youth Library Review*, Issue No. 31, Spring 2002
- ⁴⁸ *The code of practice for public libraries: study support*, The Quality in education Centre, University of Strathclyde, 2002
- ⁴⁹ *Early Years Survey, Library Association 2001* <http://www.la-hq.org.uk>
- ⁵⁰ *Partnership in Promotion: publishers, booksellers and libraries working together to promote reading*. S.Thebridge, B.Train and P. Dalton. University of Central England, 2001.
- ⁵¹ *Partnership in Promotion: publishers, booksellers and libraries working together to promote reading*. S.Thebridge, B.Train and P. Dalton. University of Central England, 2001.

As they grow up, children and young people have a right to expect high quality services to help them prepare for their young adult lives and the responsibilities and challenges that will follow.

In this context, services for children and young people must improve.

....To fail to do so, will not only mean a failure to secure children and young people's rights today, but will also fail them in their future roles, as our next generation of adults - a failure which would affect us all¹

The Children's and Young People's Unit's Consultation Paper, issued in late 2001, presents a challenge to all providers of services to children and young people, and particularly to library services, which are seen to be at a crucial watershed in their development.

This final chapter will attempt to draw together earlier outcomes and predict how libraries can best develop their services to meet the needs of children and young people in the future. Naturally, there will be an element of crystal-ball gazing involved and some generic recommendations made which will need local interpretation. However, there is one key principle which we need to be borne in mind at all times.

Any consideration of how services might change or develop in the future must be the result of a focus on the individual child.

Many pieces of research have underpinned the preceding chapters, but the key research evidence has come from a study commissioned by Resource entitled *Start With the Child²*, and the desire to keep the needs of the child as our constant focus, has guided this piece of work.

I. The Changing Context

The first chapter of this report has described in some detail those aspects of the needs of children and young people which remain constant and those which result from our changing world, and its impact on children's and young people's experiences and expectations. What can we deduce about the social and cultural experiences which will continue to influence their needs in the future? One thing is certain. The world will continue to become a more complex place, through the use of ICT, migration, globalisation and a widening poverty gap.

The patterns of family life, the cultural contexts of children and the differing needs, generated by their backgrounds and experiences, are likely to become still more varied. There no longer seem to be any norms or a traditional family structure, and for many families, lack of employment and poverty will be a dominant feature of their lives.

The influence of parents and carers, according to all the research, will always be a crucial part of children's early learning and skills development and the widespread economic dependence of young people on their family, for a much greater length of time, seems to be a significant feature for the future.

There is no sign that the technological advances which have dominated the latter part of the Twentieth Century will abate and this will continue to have a major impact on children and young people, both in terms of the demands on them for a high level of interpersonal communication and technological skills, but also in the sophistication of the world of information to which they are privy.

Pressures from the commercial world to create more niche markets amongst children and young people will influence their expectations. When, for some of them, these continue to sit alongside poor literacy and numeracy skills and poor potential in terms of the employment market, the implications for our young people give cause for concern.

It seems likely that the growing expectation of children and young people to be able to exercise choice and influence, have a right to display their independence, and contribute to their local community, will mature and grow. This important aspect of identity and self-development will demand a different approach from people who provide services.

*Start With the Child*³ shows us that despite their own need for peer support and group identity, it is already a source of irritation to children and young people that they are often pigeon-holed by adults. They have an overwhelming need to be viewed as individuals and, in particular with teenagers, the perceived stereotyping of their age group has given some of them a negative view of libraries and librarians.

The world is unlikely to become a safer place for young people and the trend for children to live a more enclosed life as a result is likely to continue. Libraries need to respond, both in terms of safety and accessibility, but also to the demands of a world where adventure and excitement may need to happen more often in the mind, rather than in external or outdoor activity, unless it is controlled and pre-planned.

The increasingly complex and diverse society in which children and young people live will demand even more confidence, motivation and a sense of self-esteem. The current emphasis on information literacy, communication and interpersonal skills is likely to grow. It is also increasingly important for individuals and our communities that cultural tolerance and welcoming of diversity are cultivated in young people. Technology will be an issue for some children, as long as inequality of access to skills and equipment exists, but increasingly it will be an unexceptional and perfectly natural part of their environment, which will continue to influence their leisure as well as their learning experiences.

For many children, there will be an increasing range of alternative leisure activities and opportunities to be enjoyed. These will continue to offer competition to the world of books and reading.

Key Issues

An analysis of how libraries are meeting the needs and expectations of children and young people has been provided in the preceding chapters. How can we respond to these key areas in the future and how can we improve our service provision in:

- Literacy and Learning
- Appropriate environments and services
- Services which are relevant and responsive
- Appropriate help for children and young people and those who support them
- Support from the community at large to use and benefit from services

What follows is a resume of areas in which libraries and other institutions and agencies should ensure that good practice is recorded, evaluated, disseminated and embedded in mainstream services. Action needs to be taken across the board to ensure that library services are sensitive to need, responsive to demand, and relevant to children and young people in the future.

2. Literacy and Learning

The vision of *Investing in Children*⁴ that each local authority should have an integrated strategy for delivering library and information services, through public library, schools library services and libraries in individual schools is no longer feasible, as a result of Fair Funding and other developments.

However, the three areas of service delivery to children and young people still make up a whole, which is united by its passion for reader development work with children and its desire to offer informal, as well as formal learning opportunities. At a local level, they need to negotiate how to deliver support to children and young people in the most effective way and to focus on the best outcomes for them.

The potential for libraries to make a major contribution to learning opportunities for children and young people has not been sufficiently recognised and, on occasions, barriers have been created by the way in which initiatives for funding regimes have been set up, making it difficult for libraries to play their unique role in providing community based, informal learning opportunities.

The pre-eminent importance of the early years is now reinforced by a weight of evidence which shows that investment of time and effort in the early years will pay back richly later in life. Therefore, it is vital that the further development of schemes such as Bookstart and related strategies must feature as a priority in planning the future.

Such activities, quite naturally, link into work with parents and carers, where again, the cycle of poor literacy and numeracy skills, replicated from one generation to another, points library services firmly in the direction of family learning, intergenerational projects and joint working with Early Years Excellence Centres, alongside colleagues from Adult Education and Basic Skills services. The apparent lack of awareness amongst the parents and carers who probably most need library services, is a challenge for the future and indicates an urgent need for greater and more professional marketing of services and advocacy, both direct and via colleagues in other services and agencies, which can be very powerful, as Bookstart schemes have demonstrated.

Complexity of procedures and the potential cost of fines or payment for damage to books have been proved to be a barrier to many parents and a more liberal and enlightened approach needs to be taken.

In the context of the formal learning situation, lessons need to be learned from the more rigid aspects of the National Curriculum and the National Literacy Strategy, which in the drive to raise standards may have unwittingly led to a reduction in the potential for library involvement in the wider field of reading for pleasure. There is also growing evidence that literacy standards may be “plateauing out” and that more rounded approaches are critical to further improvement.

Closer working between school librarians and teachers, LEA staff and public library staff across the whole spectrum of learning opportunities is an issue for managers, trainers and individuals. Using Study Support as an example, where funding regimes such as NOF have tended to encourage competition between providers, it is crucial that, in future, funders and providers focus on the best outcomes for children and avoid the inference that one kind of provision is necessarily more desirable than another.

The same issue spills over into the need for information literacy to be given a higher profile and to be tackled by the library and teaching professions in partnership, and for the lessons which could be learned by schools from Further and Higher Education to be addressed by cross-sectoral working. In this respect, it is disappointing that the working groups set up as a result of *Empowering the Learning Community*⁵ appear to have made little progress. This work could prove enormously helpful in addressing some important issues.

3. Appropriate Environments and Services

The need to provide an environment which is attractive, welcoming and feels that it belongs to children and young people, may seem like a fairly basic starting point, but all the research shows that this is and always will be incredibly important to children. As they grow older, the need to be relaxed in a social setting with their peers, without feeling over-supervised, is even more important.

A large part of the friendly environment is, of course, created by the staff. Their attitudes are paramount and there continues to be a concern from specialist youth librarians that all their efforts to welcome children and young people into the library can be undermined by negative behaviour by unenlightened staff. **It is crucially important to ensure that all staff receive relevant training and that they understand that, as a priority for the library service, customer care practices apply to children and young people. Add into this equation the involvement of children and young people in designing, stocking and marketing their libraries, and a whole new relationship can grow up between the service and its younger customers.**

Lively activities with exciting displays and exhibitions will continue to feed the necessary interactivity and ownership so important to children and young people's sense of belonging. However, experience and evaluation of past schemes such as the Summer Reading Challenge, make it clear that all of these must be undertaken in a professional way, using high quality marketing and promotional materials, and

increasingly the most cost effective way to ensure such quality lies in shared expertise and training and nationally produced materials, often with major sponsorship, which can be adapted and used locally. However, it is also very important for library managers to think beyond building-based work, when deploying their staff and take up the challenge of outreach and partnership working to ensure that they are offering a really inclusive service.

How library services develop their technology based services creatively in the future, will be an important benchmark of progress. The baseline must be that children and young people will have easy access to ICT services for a variety of purposes as a part of the core service. Beyond that, creative projects to support reader development as well as information literacy and study support need to be developed locally and nationally to exploit resources to the full and extend children's and young people's skills and interests.

4. Services which are Relevant and Responsive

The problem of library opening hours affects library usage by children and young people as much and maybe more than other sectors of the community. An accessible location and opening hours, which at the very least give priority to weekend opening, are key to declining use of libraries by parents and children. Access to virtual library services must also be a priority for the future, in order to overcome some of the cost implications which impede longer opening hours and these will feel entirely normal to young people, as a natural adjunct to their traditional usage of services.

Library staff feel, quite rightly, an obligation to ensure that children and young people have access to the best possible literature and information resources, but awareness of the increasingly pervasive youth culture cannot be ignored. Librarians, publishers and booksellers must continue to work together to ensure that this culture can influence the range of books, magazines, other materials and activities too. In the future, the benefits of working with other relevantly experienced colleagues such as Youth Workers, must influence the development of collaborative partnerships. Evidence shows that these can help gain the confidence of young people, overcome some of the image and attitudinal problems presented by libraries, and also bring helpful objective views to bear on service development.

Finally, the time has come to go beyond the occasional gesture and to ensure that there is a real involvement of children and young people in planning the future of their own services, by organising focus groups or using any existing consultation networks, such as Young People's Parliaments.

5. Appropriate Help for Children and Young People and for Those Who Support Them

The need for intervention rather than passive provision in libraries has long been recognised as an absolute necessity for children and young people, their parents and carers. The loss of specialist staff outlined in Chapter 3 is cause for concern, as it potentially represents a loss of focus and expertise which library services can ill-afford. The experience which children's and young people's specialists bring to the

many thousands of books and other materials published each year is crucial to the development of children as confident readers, willing to experiment with new ideas and challenges. Generalists can only go so far in this arena. It requires constant development and specialist knowledge.

In future, if mainstream specialist posts are reducing and project based posts (eg Early Years, Homework Support staff) remain a growth area, then it becomes even more important to support these new forms of specialists, who may not have a librarianship background, with training and networking opportunities. It is also crucial to ensure that the learning outcomes of their activities are disseminated across the workforce and that quality standards for new services are created, against which progress can be measured.

Many imaginative and highly innovative projects, targeted at specific needs emerged from the Year of Reading, which proved that library staff are both inspirational and energetic in seeking to support children and their parents and carers. Fruitful partnerships were formed in non-traditional locations, like prisons, workplaces and hospitals.

Increasingly, this kind of targeted provision must be developed to overcome barriers, to reach excluded groups and to embrace the needs of the most deprived families in our community.

There are associated problems with this approach, which will be covered later in this chapter, but if library services are to remain relevant and responsive in the future, targeting of resources is vital.

6. Support From the Community at Large to Use and Benefit From Services

If libraries are to remain an important focus for their locality and to the next generation of the members of their local community, the evidence shows that working outside the library, with other partners and agencies, is extremely important. Locating the barriers to take-up of services and seeking out the partner, with whom the library service can work to find the solution, is surely the key to success. However, partnerships can only flourish when all partners have clear objectives, agreed terms of reference, and are willing to compromise to achieve desired outcomes.

Partnerships are hard work and time consuming, but all the evidence indicates that pooled resources and shared expertise will help libraries to provide holistic services to promote social inclusion, meet special needs and touch the lives of hard to reach groups. The evidence, albeit anecdotal, also suggests that projects make maximum impact when they have library involvement.

7. Conclusions

The preceding chapters describe a hugely impressive range of projects, funded by a variety of bodies, largely on a time-limited basis.

A feature of many of these projects was the determination to meet the needs of individuals and address the burning issues of the day. This approach points the way for the future, but highlights an issue which will need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

It is likely that the trend for development work to be funded in this way will continue and potentially expand. The positive outcomes and the opportunity to innovate have been a source of great satisfaction to librarians, but a variety of problems have emerged, including:

- A huge variation in the practices which are being employed by libraries across the country, which is good for the development of new ideas, but does not address the quality of the core service received by children and young people.
- Many initiatives have not been evaluated rigorously, so it has not been possible to make a judgement about their value and impact.
- Even where evaluation has proved the value of the activity, long term sustainability has been a problem. Library services have found it difficult because of funding issues, inflexibility or resistance from staff or systems to embed the lessons in mainstream services.
- The skills which develop out of the project lie in the hands of project workers, who may only be on temporary contracts or secondments. Spreading the learning and developing staff skills across the board have often been neglected or resisted, when front-line staff have to maintain core services while others undertake interesting projects.
- If learning is difficult within one service, it is multiplied many times over in ensuring that nationally, library staff have the opportunity to share in successful outcomes and develop their skills and services.
- This is particularly significant for library services in rural communities; as they do not have access to the range of external funding opportunities which are offered, in order to address urban deprivation and social exclusion. Therefore, the opportunity to share in the learning which emerges from time-limited projects across the country is extremely important for them.
- There is some gathering together of learning outcomes, but it is not exhaustive or disseminated widely enough to have the impact which it should.
- Powerful advocacy opportunities which should emerge from value and impact studies are therefore lost, at a local and a national level.
- There has been a major reduction in research projects specifically aimed at disseminating learning from good practice case studies in recent years

Statistics of library use indicate that use of libraries by children and young people is declining, along with use by adults⁶. While a considerable amount of valuable work is being achieved, often through special projects and campaigns developed at national level, this work is not in itself enough. If library use contributes importantly to the growth and development of children and young people, and to their educational, cultural and reading needs, we need to work to reverse these trends. This means persuading parents and carers of the importance of library use, and to attract them back to visit the library with their children. Equally, we must find ways of making all libraries more directly relevant and attractive to older children and young people. But to seek to attract them as visitors is not enough. Library services must develop modern services that reflect and support children's view of culture, recreation and information, if they are to be successful in meeting children's and young people's needs now and in the future.

These aims cannot be achieved by libraries working alone. Government has a responsibility to provide more investment in buildings, opening hours, technology and staffing; Schools and educationalists have a responsibility to encourage library use and make library visits and activity an essential ingredient within the curriculum; publishers need to respond to children's tastes and reading needs; investment is needed in development to trial and evaluate new ways of offering services, and in particular meeting the needs of children from minority groups and those who have special needs; local authorities should be investing in their local library services to provide the best possible support for young people locally; library services should be doing all possible to ensure that local staff are confident and competent in supporting children and young people, and local library service managers should be working closely with other services to provide the best possible support to every individual child.

Above all we need to start young, through creative partnerships like Bookstart, so that a positive view of books, reading and libraries is embedded from the earliest stages of development, and children are not excluded from the opportunities, excitement and sheer joy, which libraries can bring into their lives.

¹ Consultation document on a Strategy for Children and Young People. Children's and Young people's Unit. 2002

² *Start with the child: the needs, motivation and attitudes of children and young people*. Morris Hargreaves MacIntyre. London; Resource, 2002

³ *Start with the child*. 2002.

⁴ *Investing in children: the future of library services for children and young people*. Department of National Heritage. Library Information Series, No 22. HMSO. 1995

⁵ *Empowering the Learning Community: report of the Education and Libraries Task Group to the Secretaries of State for Culture, Media and Sport and for Education and Employment*. London; Library & Information Commission, 2000.

⁶ *Library services for children, young people and schools*. Loughborough; LISU, 2001.

Appendix A

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(* indicates a member of the Writing Group)

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Head of Community Services, London Borough of Greenwich

Sarah Wilkie
Past-Chair, Youth Libraries Group

Appendix A

Sue Wilkinson
Director of Learning & Access, Resource

Kate Wilson
Managing Director, Macmillan Children's Books

Requests for evidence

Organisations and individuals invited to submit evidence who were not represented on the working group:

Liz Attenborough – Formerly Director of the National Year of Reading

BBC

BECTa

Booktrust

CIPFA

Wendy Cooling – Reading Consultant

Education Extra

Education Publishers' Council

Kathy Ennis – Post 16 Learning Adviser – CILIP

Group for Education in Museums

Library and Information Statistics Unit

National Youth Agency

Quality and Curriculum Authority

Quality in Study Support

Sure Start

The Children's Group of the Publishers' Association

The Paul Hamlyn Foundation

The Royal National Institute for the Blind

The School Libraries Group of CILIP

The School Library Association

The Youth Libraries Group of CILIP

UK UNESCO

University of Central England

Appendix B

Background and terms of reference

In 1995, the Library and Information Services Council (England) produced a report called *Investing in Children: The Future of Library Services for Children and Young People*. The report presented four key conclusions, on which it based its recommendation. They were, briefly:-

- That the role, function and mission of library services for children and young people have to be seen in the round, with integration of the major channels of delivery
 - The public Library Service
 - The schools library service
 - Libraries in individual schools

at a strategic level

- That the potential of the public library as a force in support of reading and information literacy cannot be too strongly emphasised
- That problems in public and education library services for children and young people are evident in:-
 - Inequality of access to facilities and services
 - Wide disparities in standards of provision across the country
 - Lack of integration of services
 - Failure to accord proper priority to children and their needs
 - Inadequate or no research into reading and information needs
- That the way forward lay in:-
 - Identification and dissemination of innovative practice
 - Implementation of the recommendations
 - A continuing base of research and statistical information

There followed twenty-one recommendations for action addressed to a wide range of bodies from the (then) Department of National Heritage to individual library managers.

Investing in Children proved to be a valuable advocacy tool and an influential document in preventing “present problems from cumulating into a future crisis”. However, despite the implementation of at least some of the recommended actions, progress has not been quite as the LISC Working Party visualised and, to put it bluntly, most of the problems outlined in the fourth key conclusion are still an issue today.

In addition, the world has been transformed in the last seven years. We have been subject to huge political, cultural, demographic and technological change. As a result, CILIP, the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, at the request of children’s and young people’s and education specialists, decided that it was time to revisit

Appendix B

the fundamental questions posed by Investing in Children, and set up a working group (see Appendix A) in November 2001 to address four broad questions:-

- To examine the changing library needs of children and young people
- To examine the extent to which they are being met by existing library services for children and young people, provided through the public library service, school and further education libraries and school library services
- To review the relationship between libraries, reading, literacy and learning revealed in recent research and development work and assess its impact and effectiveness on library services
- To recommend improvements, and how to bring them about, in library services for children and young people.

The Working Group agreed the following:-

- That the age group to be considered should be children and young people from 0-16
- That the report would primarily reflect English policy and library themes, although it is hoped that the other home countries will find the report significant
- That the report would be aimed at the government and those responsible at national, regional and local levels for making decisions on library provision and other stakeholders and partners
- That the outcomes will be adopted as formal policy guidelines by CILIP and will represent a vision of the future of library services for children and young people, for the organisation and the profession
- That overriding everything else, the report would be totally committed to a focus on children and young people and their needs, rather than a broader view of service development.

In addition a commitment was made to base any conclusions and recommendations on the evidence of research, albeit sometimes softer, anecdotal evidence from case studies where harder impact studies are not available.

Appendix C

Acronyms

ALP	Annual Library Plan
ASCEL	Association of School's, Children's and Education Librarians
CILIP	Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals
CPD	Career Planning and Development
CTC	City Technology College
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EAZ	Education Action Zone
EPPE	Effective Provision of Pre-School Education
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
EYCDP	Early Years and Childcare Development Partnership
FE	Further Education
GEM	Group for Education in Museums
HE	Higher Education
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
KS	Key Stage
LEA	Local Education Authority
LIC	Library and Information Commission
LISU	Library and Information Statistics Unit, Loughborough University
LMS	Local Management of Schools
NLS	National Literacy Strategy
NOF	New Opportunities Fund
ODP	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PLS	Public Library Standards
PLUS	Public Library User Survey
SEN	Special Education Needs
SLG	School Libraries Group
SLS	Schools Library Services
SRB	Single Regeneration Budget
UCE	University of Central England
YLG	Youth Libraries Group

Notes

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